

STAR-LIGHT.

Acting Charade, for Young People.

BY M. A. ALDEN.

CHARACTERS.

HELEN BENARD, a star actress.

MRS. GAINS, an actress, poor and unpopular.

LILY GAINS, her little daughter.

SOPHY LEE, daughter of the stage manager.

MR. MAITLAND, a wealthy young gentleman in love with Helen Benard.

MR. LEE, stage manager.

STAR.

SCENE. A poorly furnished chamber. Lily in bed, and Mrs. Gains seated by her side.

Mrs. Gains (wiping the tears from her eyes). It's a hard, hard world! I work day and night, and nothing but misfortune comes to repay me.

Lily. I'm so sorry I slipped and hurt me, but I'll get well as fast as I can. There was too much wax on the floor, and my foot slipped.

Mrs. Gains (unheeding). There's Miss Benard gets paid so much better than I, and she doesn't need it. It's always so, those that have everything to begin with get everything given to them, and those that haven't anything lose all they have. (Gets up and goes to the window.) It's snowing hard, and I must go to rehearsal. Shall I do anything for you before I go, Lily?

Lily. No, thank you, mamma, only give me a kiss, and don't cry any more.

Mrs. Gains goes out, and Lily lies quiet for a while, when a knock sounds at the door.

Lily (faintly). Come in!

Miss Benard (entering). Why, Lily darling; you all alone! (Goes to the bed and kisses her.)

Lily. Mother's gone to the rehearsal.

Miss Benard. Yes, and I ought to be there this minute. But I came to see you. Is your ankle better?

Lily. It doesn't pain me all the time now. I hope I shall be able to walk again soon, for mother feels so discouraged.

Miss Benard. We miss you on the stage, pussy, but you ought to have a good rest, and Mr. Lee thinks so, and has sent you this from Sophy, who liked you so much as a little Cupid.

Lily (opening the envelop that Miss Benard

hands her). Money! But I am afraid mother will not like to have me take it.

Miss Benard. I will tell her about it, and I am sure she will. I must go, now, but I shall send Sophy to spend an hour with you; she will be glad to come. Good-by. (Goes out.)

Lily (sitting up with a shawl over her shoulders, and laying the bills out on the counterpane). Fifty dollars! O, if mother will only not make me send it back! It will do us so much good! I wonder if Sophy will come? I half wish she wouldn't, for she dresses so beautifully, and is used to such beautiful rooms, I'm afraid she won't enjoy herself.

A knock.

Lily. Come in!

Sophy (entering). O, I'm so sorry you hurt your ankle. Miss Benard made father let me come and see you. Did you get my present? That was Miss Benard's doings. Isn't she splendid! I think it's delightful to be a star, and such a good star, too.

Lily. Yes, it must be. I'm so glad you've come, and I thank you so much for the money, even if mother should make me send it back.

Sophy. Take it back! O no, she won't make you do that. We wouldn't take it back. Let me arrange your pillows so you can sit up. There!

Lily. You are a darling.

Sophy. So are you.

Lily. What nice times you must have, going to school just as much as you want to.

Sophy. I don't like to go to school; I would rather a great deal go on the stage as you do. Didn't you like being Cupid?

Lily. Pretty well. But it grew tiresome. I would rather go to school than be a Cupid.

Sophy. But if you keep on being Cupids and fairies you will be a star, by-and-by, like Miss Benard, and then you'll make lots of money.

Lily. I might like to be a star, but I am afraid I never shall. Not a star like Miss Benard.

Sophy. But just as good a one; then you'd have everybody wanting to see you, and so gracious to you.

Lily. I don't think I care about that. I'd like to have money, so that mother and I might live in a nice pleasant little house, and mother wouldn't have to work so hard as she does.

Sophy. I wish you might, and if I could I'd give it to you. But I'd like to be a star just like Miss Benard, and have bouquets and lovers, and everything nice that you can think of.

Lily. I'd rather have Miss Benard's kind heart than all her money and lovers.

Sophy. That's the strange thing I overheard father say, that a star should have so much heart. I do not see why stars should not have hearts.

Lily. Neither do I, except the stars in the sky, and it seems as if they must have hearts sometimes, they look down on us so softly.

Sophy (looking out the window). There they come.

Lily. Who?

Sophy. Miss Benard and your mother.

Lily. Together?

Sophy. Yes. Miss Benard is laughing, and she is coming in.

Miss Benard and Mrs. Gains enter.

Miss Benard. So here is Sophy, good child; she has been cheering Lily, I can tell by her face. What have you two been talking about?

Sophy. We have been talking about you.

Miss Benard. About me! And what have you been saying?

Sophy. That it is a nice thing to be a star.

Lily (to her mother standing by her bed). You will let me keep it, wont you?

Mrs. Gains. Yes; I feel that we have earned it.

Lily (in distress). But it is a present from Sophy, mother. Wont you help me thank her?

Mrs. Gains. We are obliged to you and your father for this favor, Sophy.

Sophy. O, you must thank Miss Benard. She proposed it and brought it.

Miss Benard. And you are going to make

me bear the blame? Well, I will try to. And as for being a star, children, do not envy me. I hope the stars up in heaven know nothing of the trials of us stars on earth.

Sophy. I do not think you have many trials, Miss Benard.

Miss Benard. Compared with some people, perhaps I haven't. But being a star, as you say, I have more than I otherwise should.

Mrs. Gains. I think I should be willing to be a star, for a little while.

Miss Benard. What a pity that we could not change places for a time. I should like to be the mother of a dear little daughter like Lily.

Mrs. Gains. True. I do not think I could exchange even with a star at the risk of losing Lily.

Sophy. So you see you are more than a star already. Good-by. I shall come and see you again. (*Kisses Lily.*)

Miss Benard (kissing Lily). Good-by. Good-by (*to Mrs. Gains*). We shall see each other to-night.

Exit Miss Benard and Sophy.

Lily. Now you can have a nice rest, mother, for this money will more than pay what we owe for rent.

Mrs. Gains. Yes; and you, my darling, have still greater fortune. Miss Benard proposes sending you to school, and I have consented.

Lily (joyfully). I was born under a lucky star, I know. Kiss me, mother darling! *They embrace and kiss, and the curtain falls.*

LIGHT.

SCENE. *A pretty little sitting-room. Mrs. Gains and Lily seated at a table, the former sewing, the latter reading.*

Lily. Can you see, mamma? Shall I turn up the light?

Mrs. Gains. I see very well. What a soft pleasant light this lamp gives.

Lily. Yes. I like it better than gas. It doesn't hurt my eyes. I wonder if Sophy is coming to-night.

Mrs. Gains (listening). Yes, I hear her on the steps.

Sophy (entering). Good-evening. Did you think I wasn't coming?

Lily. It is late.

Sophy. I stopped to look at the sky. There is a beautiful light in it. Just come to the door and look.

They all go to the door, and stand a few moments gazing at the sky.

Mrs. Gains. You had better not stand there any longer, the air is chilly.

They shut the door and sit down to the table.

Sophy. I want to know if you don't think the light was beautiful on the stage the other night? The red and blue light, I mean, in the last tableau.

Lily. Beautiful, but it hurt my eyes.

Sophy. You were right in it, and minded it. You looked as cunning as an angel, and Miss Benard was beautiful.

Lily. Don't you think Miss Benard has changed? She seems so sad, sometimes, I wonder what is the matter.

Sophy. I think she is unhappy because there is a rich man who wants to marry her.

Lily (laughing). Does that make her unhappy?

Sophy. But she doesn't want to marry him.

Lily. Nobody is going to make her, I hope.

Sophy. No; but he keeps tormenting her.

Mrs. Gains. Do you think that is what makes her seem unhappy? I think there is another cause.

Sophy. Well, I only wish, whatever it is, that she could be happy again.

Mrs. Gains. Hark! did I hear a step?

A knock outside the door. Lily opens the door.

Lily. Miss Benard!

Miss Benard (coming in). Can I see your mother?

Mrs. Gains. Miss Benard! Yes; what is wanting?

Miss Benard. I would like to see you alone.

Mrs. Gains. Lily, take Sophy up stairs into my room; there is a fire there.

Sophy and Lily leave the room. Miss Benard throws herself into a chair, covering her face with her hands.

Mrs. Gains. What has happened?

Miss Benard (without uncovering her face). He came to my house, and I came here.

Mrs. Gains (perplexed). Who?

Miss Benard. Mr. Maitland.

Mrs. Gains. Why did you do so?

Miss Benard. He did not know it. I was up stairs when I received his card, and I sent down word, "not at home." Then I came here.

Mrs. Gains. Why do you avoid him?

Miss Benard. For his own sake. His family are opposed to his attentions to me, and

I will not injure him by receiving them.

Mrs. Gains. You injure him more by not receiving them. Believe me, he loves you; and if you love him, nothing ought to separate you.

Miss Benard. I wish I dared to think so.

Mrs. Gains. You ought to think so. Come, let me help you to your happiness, who have helped me to so much. Take my advice, and accept the love which is offered you, despite the opposition that it receives!

Miss Benard. If I only dared.

A knock outside. Mrs. Gains goes to the door, while Miss Benard disappears in an adjoining room.

Mrs. Gains. Good-evening, Mr. Lee. Come in, if you please.

Mr. Lee (entering). Is Sophy here?

Mrs. Gains. Yes; I will call her. *(Calls Lily and Sophy.)*

Mr. Lee. You have a very pleasant home here, Mrs. Gains.

Mrs. Gains. Yes; thanks to you and Miss Benard.

Mr. Lee. Thanks, you mean, for your faithfulness in your duty, and your willingness to allow Lily on the stage, when she is not busy with her studies. But speaking of Miss Benard. I am afraid she has appeared too constantly of late. She seems to have lost her usual sprightliness.

Mrs. Gains. It cannot be possible that the Maitlands still object to her alliance with their son?

Mr. Lee. Until the last moment they have done so. To-night I heard that their objections were removed; and young Maitland has gone, I believe, to announce the happy intelligence to Miss Benard.

Enter Lily and Sophy, exclaiming together: O the light, how it dazzles our eyes!

Mr. Lee. Too much light. We can't often complain of that.

Mrs. Gains. Have you been sitting in the dark?

Lily. Talking by the firelight.

Sophy. How many kind of lights there are. Firelight, sunlight, moonlight and—

Mrs. Gains. Delight. Indeed, Mr. Lee, what you have told me makes me very happy.

Mr. Lee. And myself also. Good-night, for I must be going. Good-night, Lily. Come, Sophy.

Exit Mr. Lee and Sophy. Enter Miss Benard.

Mrs. Gains. Did you hear?

Miss Benard. Yes, Mr. Lee came for Sophy.

Mrs. Gains. Did you hear what he said?

Of course you didn't. How could I be so stupid?

Miss Benard. What did he say?

Mrs. Gains. Lily, dear, it is quite time you went to bed.

Lily. Good-night, then. (*Kisses her mother and Miss Benard, and leaves the room.*)

Miss Benard. I know by your face that you have good news.

Mrs. Gains. Yes, and for you. You did very wrong to run away. The Maitlands have at last come to appreciate their son's choice, and he visited you to-night for the purpose of—

Miss Benard. You are trying to deceive me. O believe me, it is better that you should not.

Mrs. Gains. I am telling you what Mr. Lee told me.

Miss Benard. I cannot believe it—and yet your face tells me you are not deceiving me.

Mrs. Gains. Not unless I have been deceived myself.

Miss Benard. Then, indeed, my heart is light.

Mrs. Gains. And, my best of friends, it deserves to be.

Takes Miss Benard's hand in hers, and kisses her. Curtain falls.

STAR-LIGHT.

SCENE. *A balcony at night. Enter Miss Benard and Lily.*

Miss Benard. So you are very glad, my darling, that I am happy?

Lily. So glad that I must dance and sing all the time; and mother says I make her head ache, which is surely very naughty of me, but when she knows it is on your account, she does not mind.

Miss Benard. Your mother is a dear woman, Lily, and I respect her very much. I am glad, at last, that she has left the stage. But I would have liked to have kept you there.

Lily. You would?

Miss Benard. Yes; because you were fitted for it. I wish Sophy had your talent, for she is very desirous to become an actress.

Lily. But her father does not wish it.

Miss Benard. He knows she would fail. But you, he would like you to be an actress.

Lily (doubtfully). Mr. Maitland does not like to have you follow your profession now, and you have given it up.

Miss Benard. Yes, to please him, but—

Mr. Maitland (coming in quietly and kissing her lips as she spoke). "I shall never re-

gret having done so." Isn't that what you would say, my darling?

Miss Benard (laughing). No; I shall never regret doing so to please you, but Lily—

Mr. Maitland. Had 'much better enjoy the star-light than to be part of it. Are not the heavens beautiful to-night?

Lily. O so beautiful! There is nothing more beautiful than the starlight, Mr. Maitland, and I shall be content to enjoy that, and not try to become a star, though a star advises me—

Mr. Maitland. By the light of her own life?

Miss Benard. Not exactly. But isn't any life hard to live at times?

Mr. Maitland. Assuredly. I found mine so until you became the light of it. My starlight. (*Stoops to kiss her. Exit Lily.*)

Miss Benard. Lily, isn't he foolish? Why, the child is gone.

Mr. Maitland. Under the starlight, to enjoy each other's foolish speeches. Ah, well! sometime she will understand them better herself. She might, at least, have said good-night.

Lily (calling). Good-night, Mr. Maitland! Good-night, Starlight!

STAR-SUNS.

BY RICHARD A. PROCTOR, AUTHOR OF "THE SUN," "OTHER WORLDS," ETC.

WHEN we contemplate the heavens on a calm, clear night,

"—when all the deep unsounded skies
Shudder with silent stars,"

the mind is impressed with the feeling that an intense and solemn calm prevails amid the celestial depths. Nor are other thoughts suggested when we consider the daily and yearly motions of the great star-sphere; for we know that these motions are but apparent. The "mystic dome" remains unalterably fixed, while the small orb on which we live rotates and revolves within it, bringing fresh star-regions into view. Nay, year passes after year, and century after century, yet to ordinary vision the heavens remain unchanged in aspect; so that to the astronomer, as well as to the star-gazer, the stars present the aptest emblems of fixity and immutability.

But when we substitute for what is seen by the bodily eye the lessons conveyed to the mental vision, the starry heavens are recognized as the scene of the most stupendous activity, and the mightiest energy, accompanied by a marvellous degree of mutability. We have at once the evidence of intense vitality and of continual decay.

For every star is a sun. There may not, indeed, be a single star which is the exact counterpart of the orb that rules our day and governs our seasons, the source alike of the light, and life, and energy on this earth, and of all the forms of force throughout the planetary scheme. Many stars may be smaller suns than ours, many may give out less light and heat, and many may rule over less important systems. But every star is a self-luminous orb, comparable with our sun in energy and splendor. Many are far larger than he is, mightier in their sway over dependent orbs, and the sources of far larger supplies of light and heat than those which our sun distributes to the worlds which circle around him. Taking one star with another, it may be truly said that the stars are on the average at least as important as the orb which we call "our sun."

But remembering all the wonders recently revealed respecting the sun—the mighty

outbursts by which luminous matter is flung a hundred thousand miles from his surface, the tornadoes which rage in his atmosphere, carrying vast vaporous masses over a hundred miles in a second of time, and the vast openings called spots, within which a hundred orbs like our earth could be contained—how wonderful becomes the thought that each one of the stars seen on the darkest night is the scene of similar displays! The minutest star we can discern possesses, in the merest fraction of its action, a supply of power competent in a single instant to destroy a thousand such worlds as ours. Yet even this seems nothing by comparison with the lesson taught us by the telescope. The stars we see may be counted by the thousand; nor does the man live whose sight is so keen that he could in the whole heavens count ten thousand stars. But with a small telescope, such as we may see in half the opticians' shops in London, stars are brought into view which (in the whole heavens) must be counted by hundreds of thousands. Already with such a telescope more than three hundred thousand stars have been not merely counted, but mapped and catalogued, in the northern hemisphere; and it is believed that the southern hemisphere is far richer. All these, as surely as those which deck our heavens, are suns like our own. Yet even these are but few compared with those which can be seen with large telescopes. The eighteen-inch working telescopes of the Herschels would show over the whole heavens many millions of stars; the great four-foot telescope of the elder Herschel, many times more, the great Rosse six-foot mirror, more than a thousand millions of suns, each instinct with such energy as makes our sun a fitting ruler of the worlds which circle round him.

Again, the stars seem fixed on the celestial concave. A thousand years ago the constellations were as they now are, and a thousand years hence they will be unchanged, save to the scrutinizing eye of the astronomer. Yet in reality every one of the orbs we see, all the hundreds of thousands of stars revealed by small telescopes, all the millions on millions brought into our ken by the la-

bors of the Herscheis, are urging their way through space with a velocity so enormous that all ordinary forms of motion seem absolute rest by comparison. Taking one star with another, it may be safely stated that on the average the stars travel through space at a rate of at least three hundred miles per minute. At such a rate our sun, with all his family of planets, is speeding through space; and each star-sun, as it travels with like speed on its appointed course, carries in like manner with it (we may be well assured) a scheme of dependent worlds. The mind is lost in the thought that myriads of millions of orbs, suns and their planets, and the moons circling around these, are thus being carried with inconceivable velocity through space.

But if the indications of energy, and as it were of vitality, throughout the universe of stars are remarkable, not less significant are the signs of stellar mutability. There are stars in our heavens which no longer shine with the light they once possessed. The star Alpha of the Dragon once (as its letter implies) the brightest star in the constellation, and also notably one of the brightest stars in the northern heavens, is now a faint and inconspicuous orb. So also the star Delta of the Great Bear, the middle star of the set of seven forming the Plough, has faded from a brightness described as equal to that of the remaining six stars of the Plough, to the condition of a fourth magnitude star. Both these changes belong to the last few centuries, the latter having occurred within the last two hundred years. Both these stars gave out as much light and heat (at least) as our own sun only a few generations ago; now their lustre has been reduced to less than a fourth of its former amount. We cannot but dwell upon the thought of the condition of those worlds which doubtless circle around these faded suns. How would it be with us, if our sun gave out less than a quarter of the heat and light we now receive from him? Or if the sun's lustre waned to this extent during the next six or seven generations, would many races now on earth be able to endure the change? There are several known instances also where stars have steadily waxed in lustre, or have shown a greatly increased brightness, for several years in succession. Setting aside the steady variable stars, we may cite as a remarkable instance the star Betelguex in Orion, the Alpha of that constellation. This star has

shown some remarkable and most perplexing changes of brightness. In the year 1836-40 its variations "were most striking and conspicuous," says Sir John Herschel, "but within the years still elapsed they have become much less conspicuous." In January, 1849, they recommenced; and in December, 1852, Mr. Fletcher observed the star brighter than Capella, and actually the largest star in the northern heavens. It would be most inconvenient to us if our sun were liable to corresponding changes of lustre. The change of Betelguex from its ordinary brightness equalling that of Capella, corresponds to an increase of light and heat which, if exhibited in the case of our sun, would change our temperate regions into true torrid zones, and make the torrid zones uninhabitable.

Yet this change is absolutely insignificant compared with that which has been noticed in the case of the famous variable star Eta of the constellation Argo, or the Ship. For this star, noted of old by Lacaille and others as of the fourth magnitude, was seen by Sir J. Herschel as one of the leading brilliants of the southern heavens; next it rose to so great a degree of splendor that Sirius itself was all but surpassed; yet now this star can barely be seen with the unaided eye.

Nor are the changes of lustre observed in the star Mira, or Omicron Ceti, less remarkable, though the astronomer has been able to recognize their period and laws, for this star changes from the second magnitude, that is, from a lustre equalling that of the well-known stars of the Great Bear, to a magnitude lying considerably beneath that of the lowest order of stars discernible by the naked eye. The change is as remarkable as though the lustre of our sun waned periodically, until we received less than a hundredth part of the light and heat which he now supplies so steadily. When we mention that the star continues thus invisible for rather less than five months, that the periods of increase and decrease are each three months in length, and that the star retains its greatest lustre for about a fortnight, the whole series of changes occupying about three hundred and thirty-one days, it will be seen how strange must be the condition of worlds circling around this variable sun.

But there is amazing variety even among the more steadfast suns. In size, for instance, or at least in the quantity of light they give out, they differ most remarkably amongst each other, and from our own sun. The

splendid star Sirius is at least two thousand times larger than our sun, if the light he gives out be of the same intrinsic brightness as that emitted by the sun. This, at any rate is certain, that our sun, placed where Sirius is, would be barely visible from our present standpoint. We know this because the distance of Sirius has been determined, and our sun's lustre has been compared with that of this star. But it is known that Aldebaran and Capella, Vega, Castor, Pollux and Procyon, all the brightest stars in our northern skies are far larger than our sun, though these stars are so far away that astronomers have been unable to determine their true distance. They are certainly so far away, *at least*, that our sun, placed where any one of these stars is now situated, would be barely visible to the naked eye from the earth's present position.

But on the other hand, we have excellent reasons for believing that many stars are smaller than our sun. A star in the constellation of the Swan, one of the few stars whose distance is known, has been shown to be not only smaller than the sun, but less massive. Though the nearest star in the northern heavens (so far as present observations extend), this orb shines only as a sixth magnitude star—that is, it is barely visible to the naked eye. Our sun, placed at the same distance, would shine as a third magnitude star. It is worthy of notice, however, that among all the thousands of isolated stars, there are probably not any which are very much smaller than the sun, while by far the greater number exceed him several hundreds of times in bulk. It would seem, then, that our sun is not by any means a distinguished orb in the stellar system—nay, that he is so inferior to the greater number of known stars, that he must be regarded as scarcely to be ranked in the same class with them.

Equally remarkable are the varieties of structure observable among the stars. That wonderful instrument, the spectroscope, has enabled astronomers to tell what many of the stars are made of, and in what condition they exist. Thus it has been found that all the stars owe their lustre to intensity of heat, a fact which Dr. Whewell questioned in his "Plurality of Worlds." The spectroscope resolves the light of a star into the same rainbow-tinted streak of light observed when the light of a body at white heat is studied with the same instrument. Moreover, the

rainbow-tinted streak is crossed by dark lines, the recognized indication of the existence of certain vapors absorbing light of particular tints. And just as the dark lines in their solar spectrum have been shown by incontrovertible evidence to be caused by the vapors of many familiar elements, so the dark lines in the stellar spectra are shown by their position to be due to similar elements. Thus, it has been demonstrated that in the atmosphere of the star Aldebaran the glowing vapor of iron is present in enormous quantities. So also bismuth, antimony, mercury, calcium, magnesium, sodium, and lastly the familiar gas hydrogen, exist in the atmosphere of the star Aldebaran, and these and other elements have been shown to exist in like manner in the atmosphere of other stars. It is worthy of particular notice that sodium, calcium and hydrogen, which are among the most important constituents of animal and vegetable structures, are present in nearly all the stars. If the orbs circling around each star-sun contain the same elements which are present in their ruling sun, as our earth contains the same elements which exist in its sun, then in the worlds circulating around Aldebaran and Sirius, Capella and Vega, Arcturus, Betelguex and Dubhe, there are not only the chief elements of such animal and vegetable structures as exist upon the earth, but also the chief elements which are employed, in manufactures and otherwise, to subserve the wants of mankind.

Among the star-depths, however, we recognize many varieties of structure which have no counterpart within the domain of the sun. Our sun is a single orb, or if some orb amid the host around us is near enough to form with him a binary system, astronomers have as yet obtained no evidence of the fact. But among the stars we recognize pairs of suns circling around each other, in periods which are in some instances of no great duration. How strange the condition of dependent orbs must be, when the sun to which they belong circles around another sun in sixty or seventy years! How perplexing to astronomers in those worlds, the relations presented by a pair of suns, each capable of dispersing the shades of night, though the daylight produced by one may be far inferior, as well as different in character, to the daylight produced by the other!

But even these varieties of arrangement seem unimportant in comparison with the

effects produced by combinations of colored suns; for among the double stars the most charming combinations of color have been observed. Passing over pairs of white, orange, red and yellow stars, there are such contrasted colors as red and green, yellow and purple, orange and blue, especially in cases where the components of double stars are unequal. In these cases the larger star is always either white, orange, yellow, or red, but the smaller is often of a deep blue, green, or purple color. It has been well remarked by Sir John Herschel, "What charming contrasts and grateful vicissitudes, a red and a green day, for instance, alternating with a white day" (when both stars are together above the horizon), "and with darkness" (when both stars are below the horizon), "must result from the presence or absence of one or both from the heavens!"

But we may also extend our consideration to other peculiarities which must exist among systems of worlds circling around these double-colored suns. For among these systems there must often be presented the phenomena of colored eclipses, when a blue, green or purple sun hides from view for a while a red, orange or yellow sun, or *vice versa*. Then satellites in such systems cannot resemble the pale-faced moon, but must show parti-colored phases, different moons in different parts of the sky showing different aspects. Then it must be no uncommon circumstance for daylight, of one sort or another, to continue for years at a stretch—nay, daylight may last so long that creatures no longer-lived than man may continue from the cradle to the grave unconscious of the existence of any of the stars which deck our own nocturnal skies.

If we were to pass to the consideration of triple and quadruple suns, and clusters of suns, we should find the combinations which might be conceived (to say nothing of myriads which doubtless exist) even more bewildering. But space would wholly fail us here to describe the varieties of star-systems revealed to view by the telescope. If it be simply noted that thousands of star-groups of various orders have been observed, while it is known that only a small proportion of those actually existing have been observed and recorded, it will be seen how wonderful is the wealth of variety existing in the universe of suns.

It must be mentioned, in conclusion, that astronomers are beginning to entertain grave

doubts whether, as had been supposed, the real limits of the sidereal system have been ascertained. It was, of course, not conceived that the limits of stellar creation had been reached even by the great Rosse telescope; for each extension of telescopic power had revealed stars which had been unseen before. But astronomers had learned to regard the particular scheme or system of suns to which our sun belongs as gauged throughout its extent. Recently, however, it has been suspected that all the star systems which had been supposed to lie outside our galaxy, and to be wholly unconnected with it, form part of its extent, and indicate at once its vastness and the infinite complexity of its structure. Should this be demonstrated, the universe of suns will have been shown to be even more stupendous a scheme than it had appeared as presented in the noble theories of the Herschels. It would indeed be presented to us as practically infinite, not only in extent, but in variety of structure, and the intensity of energy pervading its every portion.

SUSIE VANDERLYN.**BY AMANDA M. HALE.**

MISS SUSIE VANDERLYN was the only child of rich but respectable parents. Indeed, Papa Vanderlyn's strong point was respectability. He owned ever so many pews in ever so many churches, so that he was almost sure of getting to heaven by some road or other. He considered that he had bought an express ticket, so to speak, and paid handsomely for it. Wasn't his name at the head of the subscription list for sending missionaries to Brimboola Gha, and didn't his rubicund countenance adorn the sanctuary every seventh day? If after this he failed to reach the station, the fault would be the company's, not his own.

Accordingly, he sat in the corner of one of his pews and computed his dividends, and reckoned up his ships at sea, and his houses on land, and all the time looked so steadfastly at the minister, that everybody said what a pious man was Mr. Vanderlyn—so devout, as well as so benevolent! And Mr. Vanderlyn walked home after service

at a decorous pace, and ate a very fine dinner, and afterwards slept the sleep of the just man. This was when the Vanderlyn plans succeeded; but sometimes fickle Fortune turned a cold shoulder upon her votary. Then ships went down, and houses got on fire, and insurance companies failed, and Papa Vanderlyn was as cross as two sticks.

"Where shall we go this summer, Augustus?" said his invalid wife, upon one of these inopportune occasions. "I'm tired of Newport, and Saratoga is getting so dreadfully common! I wish there could be some new watering-place discovered."

Mr. Vanderlyn scowled at his newspaper, and grew red in the face.

"I know where I want to go," said a bright imperious voice. "I'm going to Grandmother Haymaker's! Mayn't I, papa?"

Papa growled. The great broker's voice was by no means like a flute. Its huski-

ness, and grumness, and general thickness had come from too many over-rich dinners, and a too great devotion to old port. But Susie understood him to say that she might go to Grandmother Haymaker's, if she liked, and he was glad to see that she had some grain of sense left.

Mrs. Vanderlyn sighed from her sofa.

"If you go to that frightful place, Susie, you will have to go alone. Nothing could induce me; not even my utter willingness—which you know so well—to sacrifice myself to you, could induce me to spend a month at that dreadful desolate farm."

"To be sure, mamma," said Susie, with spirit, "you will go where you like. I had no idea of taking you with me."

Mrs. Vanderlyn sighed again, but it was a sigh of relief. There was no managing Susie, and she was only wearing herself out in an encounter to which she was unequal. So Mrs. Vanderlyn went to Cape May, and Susie was left all alone in the great house, to make her preparations for Grandmother Haymaker's.

She began by buying a trunk as big as a small house.

"Do you think I'm made of money?" growled Papa Vanderlyn, when the bill was presented.

"Why, yes sir," replied Susie, saucily.

Mr. Vanderlyn turned upon his heel.

"By the way, Susie," looking back from the door, "you'd better bring that affair with young Browning to a settlement before you leave town."

Susie crimsoned all over her white face and neck, and drew up her proud head with an air.

"Sir?"

"Pshaw, Sue! As if I didn't know that girls know what they are about. All I mean is that something might happen to break off the match, and it's best to have it arranged. It isn't a thing to be thrown up for a trifle."

Upon this Susie threw her arms around her father's neck, and begged to know if he was ill, and if he thought he was going to die; and asserted that nobody, not even Ned, could ever be as much to her as her dear old father—all of which she quite believed.

Papa Vanderlyn looked sheepish, returned her kiss awkwardly, straightened his necktie, disarranged by the embrace, said he had no idea of dying, and went to the office.

Susie, left alone, cried a little to herself. She really loved this rotund, rubicund, mammon-worshipping father of hers, a sentiment which does her infinite credit. I couldn't have loved him if he had been twenty times my father—nor, indeed, could Susie, if she could have seen away down into the interior of his soul.

But what did her innocent eyes know of evil? How could she have recognized it if she had seen it? According to Susie, papa was a dear, cross, hard-working old fellow, and Ned Browning the flower of men—not cross at all, and blissfully idle, as a millionaire has a right to be.

Susie cried a little, as I said, and then finished her chocolate. After this she fed Dora her parrot, and then went to pack her trunk.

I must confess that she did not get on very fast. If she put a thing quite down to the bottom, she was sure to want it the next day, and it was dreadfully exasperating to have to tumble everything out and begin all over again.

Then, too, she was seriously exercised as to whether she should take her Hernani dress. It was quite the jewel of Susie's wardrobe, and she looked lovely in it. Susie dearly liked to look lovely. But then, how should she wear it at Grandmother Haymaker's, where she should want to feed the chickens, and pick strawberries, and hunt for eggs in the big sweet-scented laymow? O, print dresses would be far more appropriate for the farm, and she had a whole regiment of print dresses made, enough to keep a maid-of-all-work in fresh attire for a year. Then just before the key was turned she put in the Hernani dress, and her pink coral set, and her last new bonnet, and a few more trifles. And the carriage came around, and Ned Browning drove with her to the station, and said that he should be sure to come and see her at that queer place, where the queer people with the queer names lived, and then he kissed the tips of his lavender fingers to her, and the bell sounded, and the engine shrieked, and it was over.

It was not a very serious parting, nor a very tender one, either, but Susie felt a little sober over it, and her thoughts were a queer melange of Ned Browning, and home, and the farm. Meantime, the train rushed on and on. It climbed great hills, it shot down into green valleys, it sped

through station-houses, and screamed its way past rural villages nestled securely in some mountain hollow; and so, almost before Susie dreamed of it, fresh strong draughts of mountain air swept past her, and her cheeks kindled, and her eyes brightened, and the majestic heights bore her thoughts up and away far above the level of her everyday life. Somehow she forgot Ned Browning, and a new vigorous sense of life thrilled through and through her. When she stepped from the cars at the simple station-house, she was twice as much a woman as she had been five hours before. She could have danced, and sung, and shouted in her glee. But there was the station-master and the station-master's wife examining her and her new linen suit with lively interest, and one must not forget the proprieties even when one is away up at Westmoreland.

So Susie decorously stood still till the train rumbled away and was lost among the hills, and the little station seemed as lonely and forlorn as if it had fallen from the skies upon some desolate uninhabited planet. Then she walked up to the man in a blue-striped shirt, and addressed him:

"Has Mr. Haymaker been here this morning?"

"Haymaker?" echoed the man, looking not at Susie, but at his wife. "I aint seen him."

Just then something rattled down the road, something rolled and rumbled on the bridge, something climbed the hill at a great pace, and there was Grandfather Haymaker with the gray span and the open wagon, and he called out to Susie in the heartiest voice, and took her in his arms as carefully as if she had been a china doll, and gave her a resounding kiss; whereat Susie laughed, and blushed, and smiled back into the old man's twinkling blue eyes, and let herself be lifted up to the high seat by his strong arms.

"My sakes! You aint heavier than a child, and you're looking real peaked. Mother'll have a good time nussin' you up."

"Why, I'm not sick," laughed Susie, much amused. "I'm as well and strong as can be."

Mr. Haymaker looked doubtful.

"Anyhow, you'll be a real blessing to mother. She always wants to be coddling something, and the young man don't care about it."

"What young man?"

"O, a young feller that boards to our house. He paints picters and things."

"O!" ejaculated Susie, with transient interest. Her thoughts were all with Ned Browning, and how should she have any to spare for a young man who paints pictures and things?

She straightway forgot him, and began to inquire after her pets of two years before.

"How is the pretty red bossie? And O, where is the dear little pig with the pink nose? He was such a darling! Where is he?"

"Been made into pork long ago!" said Mr. Haymaker; and then laughed outright at Susie's dismayed countenance.

"Made first-rate pork!" he went on, chuckling. "Salted him down and sent him to Boston."

Susie privately resolved that she would never eat any pork again as long as she lived.

She was silent now for a minute or two, and the sweet peaceful beauty of the day began to win its way to her heart. The scenery here was quite unlike anything she was in the daily habit of seeing. There were no pretty mingling of town and country, no picturesque effects. The hills were high, and swept down to the valleys in long green slopes, dotted here and there by kine quietly grazing, or taking their nooning under great sugar maples that stood like lonely giants on the hillside. Wherever the view opened, hill rose beyond hill, there were more green slopes, more smiling valleys and happy kine. There was a delicious sense of largeness and freedom, a certain sense of solitude, too, which might by-and-by become oppressive, but which was now a charming novelty.

Presently they descended a hill, the horses' hoofs clattered on the bridge, and there, in advance of them, was a tall figure, with a basket in its hand, and a fishing-rod over its shoulder.

"That's him!" said Grandfather Haymaker, laconically.

"Who?"

"The young feller I spoke about. Whoa! Get in, Mr. Ascott?"

A quick sweeping glance, which did not rest for an instant, nevertheless, took in Susie, and her Saratoga trunk, and her stylish dress, and her pretty piquant face.

"Thank you, Mr. Haymaker. If it wont

incommoded you." And Mr. Ascott, with his rod and basket of trout, took his place in the wagon.

Grandfather Haymaker introduced them, and then they fell to talking of the morning's sport. Susie looked him over. He wasn't nearly so handsome as Ned, she thought. He hadn't such a nice nose, and his complexion was dreadfully bronzed by the sun. So, too, were his hands.

"I should think people would wear gloves when they go fishing," thought Susie; and then, somehow, she remembered with what a debonair graceful air Ned had kissed the tips of his lavender kids to her that morning, and she forgot Paul Ascott and everybody else. So she was quite surprised when the wagon drew up at the door of the farmhouse. Then she uttered a cry of delight. Spoiled as she was, Susie's artistic perception was true enough to show her that this dear old farmhouse was a jewel in its way.

It stood under a magnificent elm which had overhung its mossy roof while generations had come and gone with all their joys and sorrows. The dooryard was of the softest, greenest turf, and stood open to the road, as it should have done. The house itself was low and broad, and its mellow coloring, its garniture of climbing roses and woodbine, made it seem a genuine outgrowth of the genial mother earth. That there was ever a time when it had not been thus, that there ever could come a time when it would have crumbled and gone down to that decay which awaits everything, Susie could not imagine.

After her first cry of pleasure, she stood quite still and silent, till Grandfather Haymaker lifted her down, and told her to run in and find "mother." Paul Ascott watched her with a half smile on his face—a smile that lit up his dusky sternness quite wonderfully. Then he, too, went in, and ascended with slow steps to the wide, sweet, clean, low-roofed chamber where he slept.

An hour went by, and Susie had been all over the house, explored the barn, gone into ecstasies over the three white kittens in the barrel, and peered delightedly upon twelve downy chicks just entering upon a mundane career. She had seen the clover-field just coming into blossom, and the buckwheat leaves of pale green, and the dear old-fashioned garden where all sorts of

sweet-smelling flowers grew as if they loved to. She had eaten a lunch of gingerbread and milk, peeped into the dairy, looked into the quaint parlor, bright, and pretty, and clean, and finally shaken out all her dresses, including the much-beloved Hernani, and hung them on pegs in the deep unpainted closet, and gazed out a hundred times, more or less, at the low wide window which opened upon the flower-beds, and had a wide seat cushioned with pretty chintz. And at the end of it all she gave a deep sigh of unutterable contentment, and said:

"O, it is so good to come here, grandmother! It's like going to heaven."

The pretty, peaceful old lady smiled.

"Yes, dear, but we have our troubles here, too. We don't get along without them any more than other folks. It is pleasant, though." And gentle Grandmother Haymaker gave a glance around her spotless kitchen, and out over the fields, and thought it was just such a day as that, so long ago, when her young husband brought her in pride and love to the old homestead. How much had come and gone since then! And here she was, close upon her threescore and ten, as serene, as bright and kindly as though her way had been all on roses, which was not the case. She thought of the four graves in the little graveyard over the hill, where sons and daughters were lying, and her eyes grew moist. But a busy life learns how to dispose of sorrow, and presently she said she must go and cook some of Mr. Ascott's trout for supper.

"Do you like him?" asked Susie.

Upon this Grandmother Haymaker began such a eulogy upon Mr. Ascott that Susie opened her eyes in amazement. It was so odd to hear a young man commend for his talent, and goodness, and industry, and all those plain-faced virtues, and not hear a word said about his dress, or his style, or his family, or the set which he adorned.

This was only the first of a good many new lessons that Susie received. She had not a bad heart, or a foolish one. It was only lying fallow, waiting for the good seed, and when it was sown in gentleness and kindness, in all kindness and gentleness she took it home, and it throve and bore beautiful fruit.

"What a dear girl she is!" said Grand-

mother Haymaker, when she had been there a month. "I thought she was a little flighty when she was here two years ago, but now she is so sweet and sensible it's a blessing to have her."

At the conclusion of this little speech the old lady looked up at Paul Ascott, who was her only auditor, for a response. But that gentleman was very busy about some trifle, and did not answer a word. Of course he dissented, which showed a strange want of appreciation. The old lady sighed. Her two young people were not exactly as good friends as she could have wished.

One day she spoke of it to Susie.

"Mr. Ascott looks down upon me, grandmother," said Susie. "He thinks I'm a girl of the period. Perhaps I am, but he doesn't know me as well as he thinks." And her dark eyes kindled.

Indeed, Susie found herself in a new position. Hitherto she had always been petted, praised, looked up to by her circle, and she had returned the homage by a good-humored patronage. Now here was a young man—a man who wore a wide-awake hat, and had brown hands—who utterly refused to be patronized. The first week Susie wore all her pretty print dresses, and her shepherdess hat, and was charming in twenty different ways. Paul Ascott minded it just as much as if she had been a veritable milkmaid. The second week Susie laid aside her rustic role and came to breakfast in French embroidered *peignoirs*, and wore the Hernani suit to church, and walked the parlor in high-heeled slippers and a train of incredible length. She fluttered a sandal-wood fan before her face, and played the fine lady to perfection. Mr. Ascott smiled out of the corners of his eyes, and lay all day Sunday reading under the apple trees.

"The man is a bear!" pouted Susie. The next morning she laid aside all these airs, which, after all, were not natural to her, and read, and sewed, and by-and-by got a little homesick.

About mid-afternoon Paul Ascott sauntered past her when she sat in the stoop, with his usual polite indifferent greeting. Half way across the entry he looked back. The sight of her face smote him with sudden pity. He slowly walked back.

"Miss Vanderlyn, would you like a drive?"

Susie blushed with pleasure, and the sudden revulsion of feeling, and the tears started to her eyes.

"I should like it ever so much; I'm so lonesome!"

She looked very sweet, and winsome, and natural as she spoke. Ascott smiled.

"I'll see Mr. Haymaker about the horse," he said gayly, and walked away.

Of course they could have the horse, and of course, too, it was a delightful drive. They gathered wild flowers, and picked up specimens, and Susie forgot to air her geological and botanical knowledge; when she found that Paul knew the name of every flower that blows, and of every pebble that sparkled by the roadside.

"He is my superior, indeed," said Susie to herself that night, "very talented, but not quite a gentleman."

Little ignorant Susie! But she was learning fast, very fast.

About midsummer Mr. Ned Browning announced by letter that he was on his way North with a party of friends, and should diverge far enough from it to make her a visit. Susie's heart fluttered with triumph. Mr. Paul Ascott would see that somebody cared for her now—somebody who was somebody too.

Mr. Ned Browning came in all his magnificent stylish travelling suit, necktie of the latest fashion, and the jauntiest of chapeaux. He was very gracious, too, very condescending. But somehow he didn't look quite the same to Susie. He wasn't half so tall in the first place. Why he only came up to Mr. Ascott's shoulders. But Susie remembered that size is no criterion of greatness. When it comes to the match of mind—

In the evening they all sat together on the stoop, and talked. At least they tried to; Susie gallantly led the way. Mr. Ascott seconded her politely, but Ned was impracticable. Susie tried politics, of which she knew about as much as the white kittens.

"I never meddle with politics," said Mr. Ned, with fine scorn. "In our country we leave that to the canaille."

Very much chagrined, Susie tried again—tried literature, art, the scenery.

"Very pretty?" said Ned, apropos of the latter. "But so inconveniently out of the way."

It struck Susie in the course of that evening that Mr. Browning was not quite so

brilliant in conversation as she had imagined him to be. Come to think of it, what had he ever said to her beyond compliments and the merest small talk of society?

By-and-by Mr. Browning himself made an effort.

"I believe you call yourself an artist," addressing Paul Ascott.

"I am an artist," was the quiet reply.

"Dirty work, isn't it—dabbling with paints? Do you make it pay? I believe there are some fellows who do."

"I believe there are!"

Five minutes afterwards Paul Ascott bade them a polite good-evening and went in.

Susie felt herself flush red with surprise and indignation. She paced up and down her room in shame and mortification.

"Not quite a gentleman!" she said, bitterly. "Who's the gentleman now, I wonder? O, what a goose I have been! It serves me right for not knowing anything."

Mr. Ned Browning made a tremendous effort, and went away by an early train the next morning.

"Pretty place, Susie," he said at parting, "but don't stay too long. Don't see what you do for society."

Susie replied coolly that she had not suffered from want of it, and made him her stateliest bow, as the train rushed away.

"Fine girl!" said Mr. Browning, nonchalantly, "but it's lucky I haven't committed myself. Old Vanderlyn is decidedly shaky."

Quite unconscious of the family shakiness Susie drove back to the farm chagrined but happy. Indeed her feelings were in an inexplicable tangle, and she did not try to unravel them.

She only knew, she only cared to know that the sunshine around her grew more golden day by day, that the sweet and rich possibilities of life opened up before her till she felt an exultant joy in the mere fact of existence.

"I am glad you and Mr. Ascott are such good friends," said Grandmother Haymaker.

A quick, glad, sorrowful thought crossed Susie's mind. This was friendship, what then was love? And yet she had fancied she loved Ned Browning. She hid her face in shame, with a deep compassion too for the poor little ignorant girl she had been.

August hung her purple mists about the hills. Later she swept them all away, and through the lucid atmosphere, you could

almost see into heaven itself. O, the unspeakable glory of the late summer days! Days that should divide with May and October the homage of poet and painter.

One of these afternoons Grandfather Haymaker came driving home from the station. He tossed a package to Mr. Ascott, and then handed a paper to Susie. It was a telegram directing her to come immediately home.

"Why, my dear, how can we spare you?" said the kind old lady.

Susie gave her one white pained look and fled to her chamber. Nobody saw her at tea time. Later, when the dusk was falling, something white flitted through the entry.

"Susie?"

She turned at the voice and went back. Paul Ascott was there.

"I wanted to tell you how sorry I am that you are going," he said, in a low gentle voice.

Susie trembled very much. She pulled nervously at a pendant branch of the bitter-sweet.

"And I wanted to tell you," she began, "only I cannot—how much good you have done me, and how grateful I am for it, only that I can never tell. I did not like you at first. I felt that you despised me, you thought me a silly girl with no love for anything but dress and amusement—"

"I very soon saw in you something higher and better than that," he interrupted.

"And you wounded my vanity very deeply," she went on. "But it was a good lesson to me—hard to take, though the hardness was soon over—but it was good for me. And you have been kind to me, and—"

She faltered here, quite unable to go on.

He had risen and stood looking steadfastly at her. Something in his face made her turn away hastily, trembling.

"Miss Vanderlyn," he said with tender earnestness, "I beg your pardon if anything in my estimate of you hurt you. So far as it was unfavorable I retract it, and I am most humbly sorry that I did you injustice."

"I did not say you did me injustice, Mr. Ascott. You had no reason to think me other than I showed myself to you—a frivolous girl. I was very silly and I know—" She paused, hardly knowing what she wanted to say.

Through the dusk she could see the smile at which he could not help listening to her.

"If I have helped to make you any wiser

I have a right to be proud. And if some time I come to you when you are a matronly lady, the happy queen of a household, and find you overwise—very much wiser than I am—I shall know that I helped to lift you far out of my reach.”

“I don’t expect to be the queen of anybody’s household,” she said, hardly noticing the rest of his speech.

He looked at her keenly.

“I know what you mean,” she cried, with a passionate impulse. “That humiliates me more than all the rest. I may be weak, and shallow, and contemptible, but I am not so contemptible as to think I could be happy with—with—”

She broke down in a sob, and cried heartily.

“Little Susie, I don’t think you are anything that is unlovely or unworthy of worship. You are so much that I think womanly and beautiful that—” his voice broke, but the infinite tenderness of it was music to her—“that if you were a poor girl I would woo you night and day till I had won your love and made myself blessed by making you my wife. As it is, our ways must part. God bless you forever, my darling!”

A light touch swept her soft hair as she hid her face like one blinded from excess of sudden light. All was still around her except the tumultuous beating of her own heart. When she looked up the white moonlight was shining around her but she was alone.

It was a dreary journey she made the next day to Boston. The telegram had given no sign why she was sent for, and when she reached the depot the family carriage was not waiting. Susie took a hack and drove to the square. A fragment of crape fluttered from the door. In great terror Susie stepped in. The servant met her with a face of respectful condolence.

“Who is it?” she gasped.

“Your mother is in the sitting-room,” said the man.

Susie ran in, and a figure half rose up from the sofa to meet her.

“O poor papa! poor papa!” cried the girl, sobbing in her mother’s arms.

It was an awful story—how awful Susie did not know until months afterwards. That Vanderlyn had failed everybody knew, that honest men were ruined by the defection of a rogue a few were aware, but

outside of his family it was hardly known that it was no sudden attack of disease which struck him down, but his own hand. The man had not dared to live.

Autumn passed into winter. Almost everything had gone to the creditors, but still the widow and her daughter lived on in the old house. They saw very little company. Mrs. Vanderlyn was a great invalid; and Susie—well, people thought she took Ned Browning’s desertion very much to heart. It was said he had not been near her since the bankruptcy came out.

One day the bell rang, and Susie rose from the corner where she was sitting to welcome the visitor. He had time to mark her pallor, her drooping attitude, her weary air, before he pronounced her name. Then he heard a joyful cry.

“Mr. Ascott!”

He held her hands, looking down into her face.

“Susie, I am told you are a poor girl, and I have come for my wife. Can I have her?”

She put her hand over her happy eyes to hide their sudden brightness, and whispered something that satisfied him.

And now we fancy we hear the sound of wedding bells, which, chime they ever so softly, can never ring in a happier life than that which waits for Susie Vanderlyn and Paul Ascott.

But first there was an explanation to be given. It was just before the day of days.

“Paul, do you think it was just the right thing to do to make me love you as you did last summer and then leave me?” asked Susie.

“How could I guess you loved me so well, dear? I had not that surety. I fancied I might have disturbed a young girl’s heart ever so slightly, as a straw ruffles a current. I believed you would soon forget me. Besides, you were coming back to be exposed to the fascinations of Mr. Browning,—”

She interrupted him in a way which he seemed to like, but which was effectual.

“Who told you that I was a poor girl?” she asked by-and-by.

“O somebody! Everybody!”

“They didn’t tell you, did they, that my Uncle Jacob died in December and left me all his fortune? It is a few hundred thousand, I believe. And so—” with happy triumph—“you are going to marry a rich girl, after all. It is good enough for you, sir.” Paul accepted the situation.

SUSIE'S COURAGE.

Shaw, Blanche

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SUSIE'S COURAGE.

BY BLANCHE SHAW.

"O no! Arthur, don't. Remember, he is your father."

"Remember! as if I could ever forget it! It is the ever present memory that he is my father, spite of all his unkindness, that drives me almost to desperation. Remember! would to Heaven, that memory, and every other faculty would fail me."

The speaker tossed the twig that he was twisting, violently from him, and set his teeth hard.

"Have patience, Arthur; it cannot last forever."

"Patience! Yes, patience, till my hair is

gray, my youth gone, and my brain blunted; and instead of being a benefactor to my race, I am the miserable plodding drudge he wishes to make me. I tell you, Susie, when I think of all, it is only the fear of making myself unworthy of your love that keeps me from doing something desperate."

"O don't, Arthur, it would kill me!" gasped Susie, to whose innocent mind, "something desperate," always meant running away to sea, and getting drowned.

Arthur put his arm around her plump waist, and drew her to him.

"Susie, I wish you had never seen me,

for then a better man would have won your love; one who could have made your life brighter, not darker, as I have done."

Susie's blue eyes filled with tears.

"Arthur, that is unkind. Could I ever love any one but you?"

"I don't know; but suppose I should go away, or commit some crime, don't you think you could soon teach yourself to forget me?"

"Never! never! Nothing could make me forget you. Please don't say such cruel words again."

"You are an angel, Susie; and for your sake I will be patient, and try to heal all ills with bank-notes, since pills and plasters are denied me."

They had reached the gate of Susie's home.

"Will you not come in?" asked she.

"No, I thank you; I must return to the village before dark. Good-by." And he turned away.

Susie watched his tall figure till the trees hid it from her sight, and then walked half sadly into the house.

"Susie!" called her mother from another room, "is that you?"

"Yes, mother."

"I am very glad. Ellie has come from school in a high fever, and I wish you would go to the village for some mustard for her; there is none in the house. Hurry, and you will get back before dark."

Susie put on her hat, and started in the path down which she had seen Arthur disappear. She walked fast, hoping she might overtake him, but no Arthur was to be seen.

"He has taken another path," said she, "for he could not have got so far ahead of me; how very—" A sound fell on her ear. She stopped and looked around. No one was to be seen; but that certainly was a voice, and it sounded like Arthur's. She listened; there it was again; no mistake this time; it was his voice. A thick hedge lined the road here. He must be behind it. Whom could he be talking with? Well, it was none of her business, and she must hurry on; but at that moment, a strange voice, harsh and gruff, said:

"I tell you there is no danger; and as to your scruples, why haven't you a right to all that is there? It will only be helping yourself to what the old miser ought to have given you long ago. Get the pile. Of course you will never be suspected; wait till the fuss has blown over, and then take the spoils and bolt."

A short silence followed, during which Susie stood rooted to the spot, and then Arthur's voice replied:

"I consent."

"Bravo! Spoken like a man of pluck. I knew you had the right kind of stuff in you; never saw a skinflint's son who hadn't. And now, when shall we operate?"

"The sooner, the better."

"So say I. There is no moon now; what do you say for to-morrow night?"

"Agreed."

"Very good. To-morrow night at twelve. We will meet behind the bank. You bring the keys, and I'll bring the bags for the game. I don't think you will change your mind."

"No, I will not. Flesh and blood can bear no more; there must be a change. Good-by till then."

He pushed through the hedge, and without discovering Susie, hurried towards the village. His companion took another path, and Susie stood alone, half stupefied by the fearful discovery she had made. She clenched her little hands tightly, and in doing so, was reminded by the money which they held, of the sick sister and the mustard. Mechanically she resumed her walk, trying all the time to convince herself that she was dreaming; but the stern reality would not be put aside. She got the mustard and returned home. Ellie was no better. Susie helped her mother watch the child till she slept, and then retired to her room to consider how Arthur could be saved.

Her first thought was, to go to him the next day and tell him what she had heard; but then she remembered he was to leave the village early in the morning, and not return till late at night. She could not see him. To tell his father would never do. No other one must know of his fall; she alone must save and shield him. And how? There was but one way. She would go to the bank and stop him there. It was a fearful undertaking for a timid young girl; but much was at stake. Little sleep visited her pillow that night, and the next morning found her pale and worn, but firm in her purpose.

The mustard had been so efficacious with Ellie, that she had reached the fretful stage of convalescence, and required Susie's constant care. All the next day she sat beside her, bathed her hot head, read to her, and did all she could to soothe her, while her own heart was almost breaking. At last the sun went down, and her mother, anxious for her

pale cheeks and heavy eyes, obliged Ellie to release her. She retired to her room and prayed earnestly for courage, and then laid down to rest.

The hours rolled on, and the clock struck eleven. It was time to go. She arose, and muffling herself in a large cloak, prepared to start on her errand. She listened a second; not a sound but the ticking of the clock, and the occasional chirp of the katydid. One more silent prayer, and then she softly groped her way to the door, and went out into the night. Holy angels, float gently down, and shield her with your white wings from all harm!

About the same hour two other forms were stealing carefully along under the veil of darkness; one was stout and burly, and walked with the soft catlike step of one who was accustomed to tread paths where his feet would make no sound; the other was tall and slight, and trod in a quick nervous manner, as though he feared at any moment a hand might emerge from the darkness and seize him. Both were going towards the little garden behind the bank. The burly one reached it first. He peered carefully around in the gloom, and seeing no one, blew a low whistle; no reply. He waited a few minutes, and then repeated it. This time a reply came, and in a few seconds the other entered the yard.

"All right?" asked the last comer, in a low tone.

"All right!" was the reply. "You are late; I feared you had gone back on me."

"No fear of that; I gave you my word, and as that is all I have to give, I am careful that it shall be good. But come; let's get through with this job."

"That's my ticket exactly. Got the keys?"

"Yes."

"Then let's to work. Steal around cautiously, for fear some one may be straggling along."

Softly they came out of the garden. All was lonely as the grave.

"Coast clear!" muttered the stout one. "Go ahead!"

They stole to the door. Arthur took the heavy key from his pocket; he was about to place it in the lock, when a small dark form glided before him, and two little white hands were laid on his. The key dropped from his hand; he saw it was Susie.

Now had she been a regular made heroine, she would have fallen on her knees, raised her clasped hands and gasped in tragic tones:

"Hold! hold! as thou lovest me!" or some other sentiment of that sort. But Susie was no heroine. She was only a loving little woman, who had risked her life to save the man she loved from committing a terrible crime, and all she did was to throw her arms around his neck and sob:

"O Arthur, don't, please don't!"

Very foolish words indeed; but a call from Gabriel would have been less potent. He caught her in his arms and cried:

"Susie, Susie, you have saved me!"

The other man stared at them a second, and then, not exactly sympathizing with the turn that affairs had taken, left with a word more expressive than polite.

For a few moments, Arthur and Susie wept in silence, and then, of course, he asked her how she came there; and she told him all; and incredible as the fact may seem, he let her go through the whole story without interrupting or contradicting her once; but circumstances were so dead set against him that he could not very well help it, and I trust, that in view of this, the judgment of his fellow-men will be tempered with mercy. Reverently he thanked Heaven for the devoted love that had saved him from crime; and then, with weary feet but light hearts, they turned towards Susie's home. She reached her room undiscovered, and, worn out by fatigue, soon fell into a deep sleep, from which she did not waken till the sun was high, and Ellie had been crying for her some time. But Ellie might fret as she would that day, Susie's temper and patience never wearied; and when Arthur called at the cottage that evening, the tale he told made her the happiest maid in Christendom.

He had confessed all to his father. Although so harsh, Mr. Austin really loved his son, and the vision of the awful crime to which he had almost driven him, rolled back the mist that avarice had closed around him, and he "saw himself as others saw him." He told Arthur that he should leave the bank, and study medicine, and that when he held his diploma in his hand, he would give to him and Susie the prettiest cottage in N—. And he kept his word.

SWEET-BRIER.

BY CLARA LE CLERC.

THE sweet odors of this delicate little flower stole upon my senses, as I stood within the door of the "Ladies' Saloon" waiting for the down train to bear me onward to an important field of labor. The perfume was exquisite, and bore my thoughts into the past. When a boy I had gathered sprays filled with the delicate pink buds and carried them to my mother. A thousand memories arose in my heart as the gentle June breeze wafted the fragrance about me. Presently I heard a gentle voice exclaim:

"O, I have lost one spray of my sweet-brier, Cousin Hettie!"

Being a stranger in the place, I had given no attention to the inmates of the Saloon—but as these words reached my ears, I turned and saw the speaker.

A fair, fragile little creature of neither the blonde nor brunette type she was. Her complexion was dazzlingly fair; her hair—'twas neither light nor dark, but a golden brown—hung in billowy waves below her waist. Her eyes were dark red-brown; such beautiful eyes I had never gazed into before.

A gray travelling suit of some summer material graced the tiny figure; a little gray hat rested upon the beautiful head. One small hand was ungloved, and the fair fingers clasped several sprays of sweet-brier. What a wee fairy she appeared beside "Cousin Hettie"—a tall, stately, dignified brunette—who looked down with a smile upon the little figure at her side.

"Well, Mabel dear, what does that signify? You have such a passion for sweet-brier. I see it so often that I really grow weary of its dainty pink buds, and, as *you* say, 'its delicate aroma.'"

"Fie! Cousin Hettie, if it were *only* possible that I might have a little home all my own. I should have a tiny bird-nest affair with honeysuckle and sweet-brier nestling about in every crevice and around every casement; in truth I should call it 'Sweet-Brier.'"

And the beautiful little creature held the cluster of fragrant pink buds and green leaves to her dainty nose; giving a sigh—for what? as she inhaled the perfume.

"Hark, the train!—I hear the whistle!"

And one white hand was raised for a moment, as Mabel "the beautiful" arose, shook out the soft folds of her travelling dress, and settled her tiny hat more firmly upon the pretty head.

"Now Mabel, dear, you will write immediately, will you not? I shall be very uneasy until I hear from you. I do not like to have you go alone; indeed I think you scarcely well enough to go back."

"Certainly, I shall write, dear old sober Hester. Do not concern yourself about poor little me; old school-teachers are not worth the worrying over. I have had a quiet pleasant rest, darling; this visit to you has been a ray of sunshine in poor 'Meb's' life; and I shall go back to my labors with renewed energy. Then, too, we have not much longer to work now; only a month or six weeks before the summer holidays."

And so this fairy-like creature was a school-teacher! I looked at her in amazement. Not more than eighteen summers had browned that beautiful brow with its waves of golden brown—and the rosebud lips were as pouting as a child's.

The train came thundering on—and amid the hurry and bustle attendant upon such occasions the two ladies left the Saloon while I was giving some directions concerning my baggage, and I saw them no more until the bell sounded the signal for departure—and as I sprang upon the train I almost ran over the dignified "Cousin Hettie," in whose dark eyes there lurked teardrops, and about whose firm beautiful mouth a quiver sought to hide itself. Lifting my hat with an "excuse me, lady!" I moved on into the ladies' car; and there, with her head buried upon the seat in front of her, sat my little school-teacher. Taking a seat at a respectful distance I watched the small figure with no little anxiety; thinking that, woman-like, she was indulging in a good cry. By-and-by the head was lifted, but the face bore no traces of tears. A quiet sadness and deep pallor had settled about the brown eyes and beautiful mouth.

Who was she, this beautiful creature, seemingly alone? Was she one of the many

homeless waifs upon life's broad sea? Were there no home-hearts awaiting her coming? Or must she alone enter upon her various duties?

These and a thousand other conjectures floated through my brain, while the cars were moving swiftly on—on—past homesteads and little towns, bearing us onward—me to my place of business, Memphis—and her—where?

There was something very interesting about this young girl; her entire appearance was unique. Even the floating hair—a something so uncommon to the high and ponderous chignons worn now-a-days by the fashionable ladies of society—seemed so careless and yet so beautiful, that I gazed upon the wearer in silent admiration.

The June afternoon was wearing away, and still I sat gazing upon the fair form opposite, which sat with thoughtful eyes looking out upon the scenes we were passing. I endeavored to turn my thoughts and eyes away, but they would not.

After a while one little hand reached forward and gathered up the clusters of dying buds and withering leaves, which rested upon the cushion in front of her. A quiver passed over the coral-like lips, and a grieved look came into the red-brown eyes, as she passed her fingers caressingly over the drooping buds. The sunshine came drifting through the blinds and rested in arrowy lines upon the golden brown hair.

The sunshine faded; and the gray twilight crept into the train and my little figure seemed weird and shadowy in the dim light.

By-and-by the lamps were lighted, and a bright ray lingered lovingly upon the pure sweet face. One small hand supported the beautiful head; the other clasped the wilted sweet-brier.

Away and away through the darkness we sped, the hoarse rumble of wheels and the snort of the engine being the only sounds that filled the night. My thoughts were away upon some Utopian dream; the fairy form of Mabel was clasped to my heart. I called her "pet" and "darling," when—there came a maddening plunge, a roar like distant cannon, and I knew no more.

When consciousness returned I found I held some object in my arms, and by the light of the June moon, which looked down mournfully upon the wreck, I found that my little "sweet-brier" was resting upon my bosom, her face as white as the drifted snow,

her long lashes veiling the beautiful eyes. I pressed the slight form closely to my heart, and wondered within myself as to how she came there.

Presently lights flickered here and there, borne in different directions by those who had come to our relief. What a scene of confusion was presented! Car upon car, a crushed and broken mass, lay heaped within a deep ravine.

"These are not dead!" exclaimed a voice, and the conductor bent his kindly face above us. "Here, lend a hand, my boys; the gentleman is not dead. I am not so sure about the lady!"

Rough, but kind and willing hands raised us, and bore us gently to a small house some distance from the wreck. My wounds were not very severe—more bruises than aught else, and a sprained ankle.

For a long time our efforts seemed vain with the fair and lovely being so strangely thrown upon our care. At length a slight convulsion passed over her frame; a quiver played about the closed eyelids and around the pale compressed mouth, and with a long shuddering sigh she opened her beautiful eyes. She gazed round wonderingly upon the strange faces bending over her, and then, with a weary moan, pressed her small hands convulsively together. As she did so, her cherished sweet-brier sprays fell from her clasp and rested upon the counterpane. I gathered them up with jealous care and placed them within the breast-pocket of my coat. I felt that somehow we two were to be more than strangers to each other.

All night I sat in a large chair at her bedside. In vain the physician urged me to retire. My little Mabel should not be deserted, I thought within myself; and I watched at her side, gently caressing the frail little hands or bathing the fair brow.

At length the bright beams of a new day began to find their way through the curtains and to press loving kisses upon the golden head on the pillow. The dark eyes opened, gazed into mine gratefully; and raising my hand, which was holding hers, she carried it to her lips, while tears gathered in the great speaking eyes.

What was it? What tie bound our hearts? Unable to resist the power which held me captive to its will, I bent forward and pressed my lips to the lily fair brow. A beautiful blush for a moment suffused the sweet face; then with a sigh she turned upon the pillow.

As she did so, the beautiful waves of hair were brushed aside, exposing a neck as pure and white as marble, and something more—a large ugly scar reaching from behind the left ear to the back of her beautiful neck. The mystery of the floating hair was explained, and I tormented myself with a thousand questions, as to how that great jagged scar found a place upon one so fair and lovely.

No word was exchanged between us. Holding my hand tightly clasped within her delicate fingers, she again slept. I sat within the great "sleepy hollow" of a chair, and pondered over the events, the strange events of the past twenty-four hours. Who was she? And why was it that I felt such a resistless, overpowering interest in a being I had never spoken to—had never met before? The day wore on; 'twas passed at her bedside. She slumbered fitfully; and I sat there and dreamed. The physician came in several times, and said if she remained perfectly quiet she would be able to travel in several days. The shock had deranged her nervous system, and she must have time to recover. He asked me if I was a friend of the lady; I told him I was.

As the twilight came on, I felt I must take some rest, I was weak, nervous and quite ill; and as Mabel was sleeping very sweetly I left her with the nurse and limped into my room. Without disrobing I placed myself upon the low cot-bed, and in a few minutes was in a deep troubled sleep. It seemed as if some one, a great tall man, with gleaming black eyes, was striving to tear my darling from my arms. She uttered no cry, but twined her white arms about my neck, and her beautiful eyes pleaded eloquently for my love and protection.

At length the hoarse shriek of the midnight train—as it came tearing into the little town—aroused me from my sleep. I raised up, rubbed my eyes and looked around me. The moon was peering through the blinds, making queer lines upon the white sanded floor. I struggled to my feet, and thrusting my well foot into a slipper, grasped my cane and tried to reach the door. Three times I made the effort before I succeeded—the agony of my foot was intense. Just as I gained my door and was leaning against it for support, I heard the train leaving the depot. A long, wild, maddening shriek it gave as it rolled away in the darkness. A shudder passed over me, for the wildness of the long hoarse whistle seemed like the wail, the sad farewell,

of a lone sad soul. I crossed the hall with difficulty and softly opened the door to Mabel's room. A shaded lamp was burning upon the table; the nurse slept in the easy-chair at the bedside—but the patient—*was not there!* The bed was just as she had thrown the cover aside; the pillow was yet warm and bore the impress of her beautiful head. A tiny gray kid—torn at the wrist and with a spray of sweet-brier clinging to it—was lying upon the bed. She had left it in the hurry of departure. I examined the apartment closely; nothing was left—yes, upon the table, near the lamp, was a tiny white missive addressed to "My Unknown Friend." Opening it with trembling fingers, I read those words:

"Mabel cannot express to her unknown friend her thanks, her lasting gratitude, for his kindness. She goes the way God has appointed her—and prays that for *him* may be given love, peace and happiness *here*; and a lasting peace '*beyond*.'"

That was all. She was gone—my love, my beautiful, and I knew not where. I sat for some moments stupefied, not knowing what to do. At length I aroused myself sufficiently to awaken the nurse and ask her concerning our patient. She gazed around with a stare of amazement—and affirmed again and again that she had not been asleep an hour; that she remembered hearing the clock strike eleven; that her beautiful charge seemed to be sleeping quietly; and being overcome with sleep she had yielded herself to its influence.

Gone, *gone*; and I possessed no clue whatever by which to trace my beautiful little "sweet-brier" not even her name. I gathered the little glove in my cold fingers and tottered from the room. That glove with its withered spray of sweet-brier was all that was left of "Mabel" the "Unknown." I must find her; I would find her; but how?

"Cousin Hettie!" The name came upon me like a ray of light. I would leave on the morning train, return to the place where we had taken passage together, and learn all of "Cousin Hettie." *Hettie who?*

There again did I find myself in a labyrinth of trouble. But I was not one to yield to difficulties. Having ascertained at what hour the train would leave, I made my preparations, and early the next morning—with my little treasured glove next my heart—I left the little village, and in the afternoon again entered the Saloon I had left such a short

time before. There was the settee upon which little Mabel had rested; and there upon the floor, crushed and withered, was the spray of sweet-brier she had lost the day before. Poor little Mabel! Who was she? Where was she? Carefully, tenderly the bruised yet fragrant brier was put aside with my other treasures. I inquired of the agent if he remembered seeing the two ladies the day before. "Yes, but did not know them—didn't think he had ever seen them before—if he had, had forgotten." I asked him if he knew a young lady of the place called "Hettie." He did not.

I then requested him to direct me to one or two of the leading gentlemen of the place. He did so, and to them I applied. The first knew no young lady by that name; the second, at first, said he did not—then, after sitting for several minutes in deep thought, he exclaimed:

"It must be Miss Esther Ingraham, old Colonel Ingraham's daughter, of Flower-Dale. They do not reside in the city, but several miles from here, in a most beautiful place. But, my dear sir, you will not find them at home; they left last night at ten for New York."

Here was a dilemma. After studying the case for some minutes I deemed it advisable to acquaint this gentleman with the facts. This I did. He said he remembered seeing a young lady (agreeing with my description) several times riding with Miss Esther in the pony phaeton, but did not know who she was. Had heard she was an invalid cousin; that she neither made nor received calls while there. Perhaps Colonel Ingraham's family physician might throw some light upon the subject. He gave me the physician's address, and I visited him immediately, and still no success. All he could say was simply this; he was called upon some weeks prior to the time of my call to attend a young lady who had been severely wounded with some sharp instrument. The wound had been inflicted some time, had partially healed, and then broken out afresh.

She was called "Mabel;" Colonel Ingraham had settled all bills; and he had no further information to give, except that the young lady seemed very fond of flowers, especially the delicate little wild rose or sweet-brier, which she always kept near her, or pressed between her pretty fingers.

I thanked him kindly and bowed myself from his presence. What should I do next?

Find Mabel I must! That night I took the ten o'clock train for New York. Further and further was it bearing me from her, yet I felt that it was the only hope I had left. I must see "Cousin Hettie!"

"*Mais, le ciel sur nos souhaits ne règle pas les choses.*" My poor ankle, bruised and sprained, grew so inflamed, and my body so weary with constant changing, and the motion of the cars, that ere I reached New York city I was tossing upon a bed of pain both physical and mental. As soon as I was able to sit up I commenced my journeyings again, but was forced to go slowly, and when I arrived in New York and searched the different registers and made inquiry at the principal hotels, I found that they had left for Saratoga the week before.

Again was I constrained to give some rest to the suffering body; though the mind was in an agony of unrest. As I lay upon my bed with aching limbs and burning fever, the sweet pure face of my "sweet-brier," my Mabel, would come before me; and those great brown eyes, so fraught with love and pleading, would gaze yearningly into mine. "Mabel, Mabel! Who are you? Where are you? Why have you cast this spell of enchantment upon me?" Often did this mad cry rise from my heart during the silent hours of the night. And there did I vow, if my life was granted me, to dedicate it to finding and loving the strange little myth—that seeming *ignis fatuus* which had lighted my path for a moment, and then vanished.

Why make a data of all my wanderings? I wrote to my agent to carry on my business during my absence, and continued the search. It seemed as if Colonel Ingraham and his daughter were likewise wild fancies of my brain, for from place to place I traced them, always hearing the same reply to my queries—"Left ten days ago!" At last I heard the joyful tidings, "Left for home four days ago!" Again with a thrill of hope stirring my sad weary heart I turned my face homeward; hoping, praying that the mystery would soon be solved.

Springing up the broad marble steps that led to the princely mansion, I rung a sharp quick peal at the doorbell.

A few minutes later I was ushered through the broad hall into a beautiful and elegantly-furnished drawing-room. I sent up my card to Colonel or Miss Esther Ingraham; and by-and-by I heard the sweep of a woman's

drapery down the broad stairway, then across the hall; and "Cousin Hettie"—tall, dark and stately as I had first seen her—stood within the doorway. A glance of recognition passed over the handsome face, as I advanced to meet her.

As briefly as possible I explained to her the object of my visit; told her the whole story—not omitting my wild deep love for the beautiful unknown; and at the close I gathered her hands in mine, and gazing into her dark tear-filled eyes, plead with her to tell me where I might find my Mabel!

"Poor little Mabel! Poor boy!" And withdrawing her hands from my clasp, for one moment one beautiful shapely hand was placed upon my dark curls, while the other covered her eyes, concealing the tears that would come.

"Why do you say 'poor little Mabel, and poor boy!'" I exclaimed, impetuously. "Tell me—I must know all!"

"You shall know all. Yes, her sad story. Mabel is my cousin, my much loved cousin—the child of my mother's brother, and several years my junior. Her father betrothed her when a child to a man a dozen years her senior, and when she was but fifteen years old. We were at that time at school together. Her father and her betrothed came to the school where we were boarding, and there, notwithstanding her prayers and entreaties, she was forced to wed the tall, dark, stern man she utterly loathed. Her gentle nature could not cope with such a wild passionate one as his. One glance of his dark gleaming eyes filled her with wildest dread. Three months after her marriage her father and mother both died suddenly, mysteriously, and since other facts have been developed 'tis thought that they were murdered. One night, six weeks later, after sitting up until near midnight waiting for her husband, the poor child began to make preparations for retiring, when her husband suddenly entered the room, his eyes gleaming, his lips purple and flecked with foam. He caught her by the waist and holding her over the open window vowed that she had lived long enough, that he was going to end her life. With a wild cry the poor child closed her eyes and prepared for death—for death would have inevitably followed—but another freak seemed to seize upon the madman—for such he was. He bound her in the window, her body half suspended over the casing, and left her there. Hanging in that position she was

soon insensible, and knew nothing more until a late hour the next day she awoke to consciousness, to learn that she had been rescued from her perilous situation by friends, and that her husband was in the hands of competent judges, who decided it was best for him to be placed in an insane asylum. Poor little Mabel! She could not remain in a place fraught with so much horror; so she determined to return to school; and once more in the bright and cheerful hall she tried to cast aside the dark pall which enveloped her and be again the bright little Mabel of old.

"I graduated and left school the summer she returned; and she, with a Spartan-like bravery battled through the course, and one year ago received her reward. But still she would not return to the old place. She had decided to teach. 'I must do something, Cousin Hettie, else my heart will break!' moaned the stricken one, as she buried her face upon my shoulder; so at last we consented, and the little creature entered upon her duties as instructress in the same institution wherein she had completed her course.

"All this time her husband had been closely confined, and guarded with the strictest care. But this spring, in March, the madman, eluding all vigilance, made his escape, and sought my cousin in her home. Not finding her there, some cunning supernatural power—which ever controls the maniac—led him to her hiding-place, and entering her room at night, he inflicted a severe wound upon her neck, just behind the left ear, with a poignard; and then with a wild yell of demoniacal glee sprang through the window to be seized upon and borne off in irons by his keepers, who, having discovered his escape, had instituted immediate search for him.

"For a while Mabel's life hung in the balance. I was sent for and went to her immediately; and so soon as she was able to travel I brought her home with me. But the journey had caused the wound to inflame, and our physician was called in. By the will of an all-merciful God, through his care and skill our loved one was restored to her former self. She would return to her school duties; and well do I remember the day she left me. We were standing together upon the balcony, she was arranging a cluster of her favorite sweet-brier, when with a slight shiver, she raised her beautiful eyes to mine with such a pleading, startled look in them that I asked, 'what is it, Mabel—are you ill?' 'Cousin

Hettie, I feel as if something, I scarcely know what, is about to happen to me. That my heart, which has never felt the thrilling power of love, will soon find its mate; yet we can never love as *others*—I shall never speak to that kindred soul but once, Cousin Hettie; then it will be no sin! Perhaps I am doing a wrong in telling you this, but I find in you Mabel's kindred soul. God pity you both!"

Then after a short pause she added:

"May I ask what she said to you?"

"Nothing!" I replied. "She never spoke one word to me—nor I to her, during the night and day I watched beside her bed. Here is the note she left for me; she has got to speak to me."

Speaking thus I drew the precious little treasure from its hiding-place and put it in her hand.

"Yes, this is Mabel's delicate chirography. She knew it was best that she should leave; she is now quite well and seemingly contented. I hear from her regularly; she has never once mentioned the meeting between you two."

"I shall not ask where she is; but I pray you, guard my darling tenderly. God pity and help me—my life is now a blank."

After further conversation, and an earnest solicitation from the lady to make her father's house my home while in the city, and a request that I would keep her apprised of my place of abode, I bade Esther Ingraham good-by.

Days glided into weeks, weeks took upon themselves the form of months, and months added themselves to the great addition table of time, until *three* long, sad and weary years stood out dark and grim upon the tablets of Father Time. I wandered—knowing not, caring not where my journeying might lead me. My business was so arranged that it did not suffer during my absence; but what cared I for that? Nervous, wretched, expectant—awaiting what? For the voice of my Mabel, my delicate rose, to address me *once*. At last the summons came—only these words:

"Come to Flower-Dale *immediately*."

"ESTHER."

Again was it June, that queen month of the year! Again was the air redolent with the delicate aroma of a thousand flowers; again did the arrowy lines of golden sunshine

mark hill and dell, and rest with lingering touches upon the many beauties of Flower-Dale, as with trembling hand I touched the bell. Scarcely had the faint echo died along the hall when "Cousin Hettie"—wearing a look of sadness about the dark eyes and a suspicious trembling about the usually firm mouth—appeared at the door, and taking my hand in hers, whispered gently:

"Come!"

Up the broad stairs she led me, and reaching a door to the right she opened it, and in a few trembling words bade me enter.

"Be firm!" she whispered, as she left me.

In a large easy-chair near the window, where the fragrant June breeze found its way in gentle breath, and the golden siftings of a June sunset glistened the bright billows of hair, with snowy fingers clasping a cluster of pink sweet-brier, and brown eyes gazing eagerly towards the door, sat my Mabel—more beautiful than any dream of the imagination. With noiseless steps I reached the chair and knelt at her feet. Two white arms were folded about my neck, and her beautiful head fell upon my shoulder. No word was spoken. What need for words? Weak, expressionless words. *Our hearts* were speaking to each other. Half an hour passed thus. Then, far off, gentle and flute-like, came the words:

"In heaven, darling, where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage!"—and her lips sought mine.

"Yes, my Mabel, in heaven!" And our lips sealed the pledge with our first and last kiss—for the beautiful casket was tenantless—the soul had become a priceless gem in the Saviour's crown.

In a secluded spot in the vast garden of Flower-Dale is a small enclosure; a delicate iron trellis work with clinging sweet-brier. A marble cross, pure, spotless, bearing the simple inscription, "MABEL," stands within. When day is marrying itself unto the night, I enter the grounds, and gathering delicate sprays of her loved flower weave them into a garland and place it upon the cross. "No cross without a crown!" And my Mabel's is resplendent with the amaranthine flowers of eternity; while I, in the silent twilight hour, with her dear eyes of beautiful brown keeping watch upon me through the heavenly gates ajar, weave this simple token of my love from her favorite flower—"sweet-brier."

SWEET-WILLIAM.

Arnold, Theodore

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SWEET-WILLIAM.

BY THEODORE ARNOLD.

GIRLS do like to be made fools of once in a while, and they deserve to be. Did you ever, dear reader, see them flock around a soft scamp of a fellow, like flies around molasses? I have many a time, and I have wished that they were really flies, and the fellow really molasses, to drown them.

William Janston was one of those lady-killers, and he did more execution with his infernal trashy love-making, than a sensible girl ought to have seen through in a minute, than a prime good fellow could do if he worked with all his might to please. "Sweet-William" the fellows called him in scorn, and the ladies adopted the name in fondness.

There's no mistake but the fellow was handsome. He was well-formed, and had a perfect Grecian face, with bright dark eyes, and a transparent skin. He could dance beautifully, sing sweetly to the guitar, and wrote jingling lines which he and his admirers called poetry. He dressed well, also, too well. I often longed to throw mud or stale eggs on his good clothes, the prig! And O! the melting tones and glances, the sighs that

he could breathe, the glances that he could give, the lies that he could tell.

Moreover, he had the art, no small one, of making each one of the flock of simpletons about him believe that she was the prime favorite. He could make a girl think that she was engaged to him, talk to her as if she were, and not commit himself by a single reportable word.

Some who knew this, some women who were not quite fools, yet tried to excuse him. "It was his way," they said. "He couldn't help being fascinating, and also fascinated by those who tried to please him; but he didn't mean any harm, and was grieved to death if he thought any one was unhappy about him."

You can't come round a woman in such an argument, when she has made up her mind to defend a man.

But men looked on the matter differently, and they called William Janston a mean scamp.

"It's all envy, you know it is, Dode," Hester Batley said to me once, when I had been

freezing my mind about Janston. "You men all hate him because the ladies like him."

"Of course we do," I owned at once. "But the reason is a good one. He is not worthy of their liking."

She tossed her lovely head. "He pleases us, and that is all we want."

"Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw," I quoted.

She pushed out her under lip. "Perhaps we are all silly; but if we are, then why should you care whom we like?"

The question was not badly put. I complimented Hester on it. "But you have some sense," I added. "And I am provoked that you do not use it."

It was useless to talk to her, and yet, I hated to give up. I knew that Ned Palmer set his life by Hester, and that he was too proud to contend with such a rival as William Janston. I thought, too, that if Ned would only put his pride in his pocket, and go in for the girl, he could get her. I told him so, but he, in his way, was as stubborn as Hester in hers.

"I'm not going to take the crumbs that fall from that fellow's table," he said, savagely. "I'm not a fellow to stand by and catch a word when he is engaged elsewhere, and be ignored when he turns the light of his face on the girl."

"Don't take his crumbs," I advised. "Kick him out of the window, and sit down to the feast yourself. Depend upon it, if you can make him look flat and mean, his chance is gone."

"Nature has made him flat and mean, and yet Hester thinks him the ideal man," he said, striking his fist on my knees with such a force that made me jump.

"Good gracious! I'm not Sweet-William," I said, drawing back. "But, Ned, girls are not worth one's being proud and reserved about. If you want 'em take 'em, that's my motto."

The only answer was a sigh and a muttered longing, "I wish I could take her!"

"I wish I could shake her!" I responded, being in a rhyming mood.

"I'm sure she is going with him to-night to the theatre," Ned said, after a little while. "And that looks particularly suspicious, you know."

"I don't believe it!" I said. "Hester isn't such a fool as to go to a public place with a fellow unless she is engaged to him, and the idea of her having him is preposterous. I

have heard her say that she didn't like the way some girls had of going round with gentlemen."

I was a little uneasy, though, for I didn't see who else she had promised to go with. Ned had asked her, and she said she had already been invited. So Ned and I took standing places, there being no other, and went to the opening of the Globe.

As we went up the stairs we saw William Janston, in exquisite array, leaning against a pillar in the rear, evidently waiting for a lady in the dressing-room. How shiny his little boots were, how well his coat fitted, and how his pantaloons looked as if he had been melted and run into them! A tuberose and a pink rosebud, emblems of purity and affection, bloomed in his button-hole as if they grew there, and were very happy to, his gloves fitted as if his hands had been painted, instead of being invested in kid-skins, and his hair was in just that state of graceful carelessness which showed that he must have spent at least one hour over it. He was, in fine, precisely such a looking fellow as a sensible man would like to take in hand and rumple up to any extent.

Ned and I passed by without being perceived by this languid divinity, and took our places against the wall that commanded the dressing-room door. Presently it opened, and our worst fears were realized. There was the light and graceful form, with an opera cape of white just slipping from the shoulders, a pink fold of the lining showing brightly against the rich brown of her dress. Her auburn hair was in a light fluff about the sweet oval face, and piled in a heavy braid at the back, a bunch of tuberoses, Sweet-William's gift, of course, her only head ornament. The filmy handkerchief, delicate gloves, white fan, all were like Hester, dainty and pretty. She gave him her opera-glass, and they went round to the most conspicuous seats in the whole house—the corner of the balcony.

"If I don't give Hester a blessing for this before I am twenty-four hours older, then I'm blessed myself," I announced.

Ned said nothing. The sight cut him to the heart. But no sooner were the two seated than I saw something which redeemed Hester a little. Though they had come alone, they were in the midst of a family party. There were Mr. and Mrs. Janston, and Tom Bailey and his girl. But why, in the name of goodness, hadn't she come in with them?

Not being myself in love with Hester, I was soon engrossed in Monto Cristo, watching the speaking face of Fechter, the lovely shoulders and arms of Miss Leclercq, and the most preposterous bustle which lifted the coat tails of Jungfrau.

"Why didn't she take it off before she put on men's clothes, Ned?" I asked. But Ned was staring at the corner of the balcony at our left, and did not hear me.

When half past eleven o'clock came, and still the play went on with no immediate prospect of ending, I proposed to go home. But Ned wanted to stay. He was interested, he said, and wanted to see the end. It was really a very clever adaptation, and didn't I think that scene of moving waves, and stone stairs, and poor Edmund dragging himself up on to the canvas rock, were remarkably fine? Of course, I knew that he was lying, that he had only got a squint at these theatrical wonders, and recollected them by some sudden inspiration, being all the time straining his eyes to watch Sweet-William smile on the lady at his side, and put up the opera-glass with his pretty little gloved hands, and examine the great actor, as if he himself were a greater actor and greatest critic who had come to see what the fellow was like.

At length the curtain went down for the last time, and Ned and I stood back in the press and watched our party go by. I was glad to perceive that Hester did not take her escort's arm, but walked between him and her brother. She spied Ned and I, I was sure of that, perhaps, had been aware of us all the evening. But we did not look at them.

The next day I sent Hester a note congratulating her on her engagement. "If you had been one of those cheap girls who show themselves in public with any young man who will ask them," I wrote, "I should not be so sure that you are engaged. But, knowing you as I do, I am positive that what everybody said last night about the family party must be true. I wished differently, but you have chosen for yourself, and I hope you may never regret it."

"There, if that doesn't start her pride, I give her up," I said, as I sealed the letter, and directed it in my best Virginia fence style.

In two hours came back a letter of four pages full of protestations, reproaches, explanations and entreaties, winding up with, "people really don't think so, do they? Come and tell me."

I didn't answer her letter. But some of her feminine friends must have comforted and reassured her, for I saw her driving out the next day as gay as a lark. She sulked at me when she saw me, and refused to speak, then smiled and nodded brightly to some one across the street. I looked and saw Sweet-William just replacing his hat on his lovely head, after a bow which was, doubtless, grace itself.

A few days after Ned and I went down to Nantucket Beach for a sniff of air. I knew that Hester was at the hotel there, and Ned knew it, too, or he wouldn't have cared to go. I didn't mean to go to see her. I told him I wouldn't; but, lover-like, he wanted to be near her. But she was one of the first persons we saw. Walking among the rocks we saw the flutter of a dress, turned a corner, and came upon Hester sitting above in a nook, and looking out to sea.

She forgot to be angry, and, blushing brightly, invited us to share her rock sofa. There was just room for us, so we accepted her invitation and were soon chatting pleasantly. She looked so pretty, and was so really glad to see us, that we forgot everything but her prettiness and sweetness. As for Ned, I pitied him, for, though she was as gentle and smiling toward him as any one could desire, I knew he didn't trust it. If she had been as amiable when William Janston was of the company, it might have been worth something.

She noticed his gravity, and tried to dispel it, at first by gayety, then with a softer sympathetic air. I didn't know what to make of her. If she didn't like Ned, then she was an abominable coquette, that was all. I wanted to put her to the test a little.

"Hester," I said, "if you stay here long your Sweet-William will go astray. I saw him yesterday walking with a lady."

Hester blushed, hesitated, then spoke out with a dignity which set prettily on her:

"I may as well tell you at once, Mr. Arnold, that I am engaged to Mr. Janston. It will stop this kind of comments, and all misunderstandings."

As she spoke Ned started up with an exclamation, and then dropped down again as pale as death. I hadn't a word to say, I was too much confounded, and Hester herself, her story told, could not speak for a moment. Her blushes had died in pallor, and she sat with downcast eyes.

At this moment there were steps above our

nook, and a girl's voice said sharply, as if through tears:

"I don't believe you! You came down here to see that Bailey girl, so her own brother said. You don't love me any longer."

While she spoke Ned and I exchanged a flashing glance, and we were quite prepared for the soft insinuating voice that answered:

"How can you have so little confidence in me, Lulu! What reason have I given you to doubt me?" O, the melting tones!

The next instant Hester was standing haughtily erect, and as the two turned the corner of the rock to take possession of our nook, they were confronted by her crimson cheeks and flashing eyes.

The girl, a stranger to us, did not know Hester evidently, and shrank bashfully back to escape. But the face of William Janston was a study. For once I saw him as thoroughly humiliated and cut up as he deserved. Without a word he shrunk away before the scorn of that lovely face, and the wrath of our eyes.

Hester stood one instant thus, like an insulted goddess, then she turned and looked at me.

"You were partly responsible for my engagement to him," she said, haughtily; "but I will not try to shield myself by such a flimsy pretext. I thought I was compromised, and as I thought him a gentleman, and attractive, and as I did not like any one else better—I thought I did not"—with ever so faint a momentary tremor—"I promised when he asked me. But I had no sooner promised than I felt I had been hasty, and now I rejoice at my release. I request you to let me go to the hotel alone; and I forbid you ever to mention the subject to me again."

She flung the train of her dress, which she had been holding up in her hand, behind her, and walked away with it sweeping after her. I never saw anything better done.

When she had disappeared Ned and I went quietly home. We talked about the weather, the beach, politics, anything that we were not thinking of. But we never mentioned Sweet-William, though we spoke to him.

He was on board the boat when we went up, and the instant we came upon him he slunk back, as if he expected an attack.

"Don't be afraid!" said Ned, with bitter scorn. "I'm not going to hurt you. You're not worth it."

I must say that Hester redeemed herself

nobly. Almost any girl, even though Ned and I were the only ones who knew anything about the affair, would have felt as though she must go off for a while, till we forgot, or the first edge of her mortification were off. Not so Hester. She faced the music. To be sure, she blushed and drew herself up when she saw us again, and was very distant and haughty for some time; but that was natural.

As for Sweet-William, he kept out of our sight. I am persuaded that his life was a burden to him for weeks, from an impression that Ned, or I, or Hester's brother was going to do him some violence. I found out afterwards that Tom Bailey, to whom Hester told all, did go and threaten his life if he ever spoke to or mentioned his sister's name.

The fellow was bitterly disappointed and mortified. He had liked Hester, perhaps, better than any one else, and, besides, she was the best match of all that he could hope for, and the most sought for. In losing the acquaintance of her family he lost a great deal. Others, without knowing what was the matter, saw that something was, and cooled toward him. The women acted like sheep; one turned away and the rest followed suit. Never was a fellow so thoroughly upset, and yet so quietly, and, to the last, only four of us knew what the meaning of it all was. The fact was, he had been for some time walking on thin ice, and now he had gone through quite. In a fortnight from the scene at the beach, he was flatter than a pancake.

But Hester Bailey was destined not to get rid of her false lover without one encounter more. I think the fellow could not believe that his influence had so suddenly been lost, and that all he had kept away from her for was from fear of a beating. Probably he believed that, if he could once have speech of her, she could not resist his eloquent pleading. At any rate, he watched his chance, and at length succeeded in waylaying her. It happened in this wise: We had a riding-party, and came home past Mount Auburn. Seeing the place, one of the company, a stranger in town, expressed a wish to see the cemetery, and regretted that he could not, as he wished to go away the next day. Hester drew up her horse at once, and proposed to go in. It was rather a sombre visit, but there was no reason why we should not go, so we went. After half an hour spent in seeing the more attractive views, we perceived that

the sky had darkened rapidly, and as we started the drops began to fall.

There was no way but to get drenched or go into the chapel and wait. There had been a funeral, and several persons were there. Hester and I went in, and Ned went for a carriage. Before he reached the gate the rains descended and the floods came. I looked out, and saw my horse plunging.

"I must go, Hester," I said. "You won't mind? Ned will be back soon."

"O, pray don't stay on my account," she said. "I would rather you should not. There is company here," nodding towards a lady and gentleman who stood half hidden from us, looking out the window.

So I went. The rest I heard from her and Ned. No sooner had I gone than a carriage drew up to the door, and the strange lady went, leaving only a gentleman. Hester did not mind that. The thought of disagreeable company in that place never occurred to her. She stood and looked out at the pouring rain that veiled everything, her back toward the one companion of her imprisonment. Presently she heard his step crossing the chapel. Supposing that he was going out she did not look round. The step paused beside her, and turning, she confronted William Janston. She was too much astonished to know what to do at once, and had stood some minutes listening to him before she bethought herself.

He improved the opportunity so unexpectedly given him, and poured out a flood of earnest protestations of love, of despair, of entreaties.

Recovering her self-possession she turned away from him, motioning him from her. He followed and persisted.

"I consider this an insult, Mr. Janston!" she exclaimed. "If you do not leave me I shall report you to those who will show you I am not to be treated with impertinence."

"You once loved me," he said. "You cannot so soon have forgotten me."

"I never loved you!" she answered, walking away from him. "I now despise you!"

He followed again. "I will kill myself, if you do not listen to me!" he cried out, desperately.

"Nonsense!" replied Hester, not at all

alarmed on his account. "You will do yourself no manner of harm."

She had turned her back and walked away from him again, when he ran and threw himself on his knees before her, holding up a knife.

"I swear to you that I will kill myself unless you listen to me!" he said, stretching one hand to catch at her dress.

Hester gave a scream. In the same instant some one dashed into the chapel, seized the kneeling puppy by the collar, dragged him across the floor, and flung him out into the rain.

"Lie there, and cool your courage," said Ned Palmer, administering a parting kick.

Hester stood with her hands clasped when Ned went back to her. She held her hands out toward him, with a look of wordless gratitude, then snatched them back, and, covering her face with them, burst into tears.

It was the most natural thing in the world for Ned to put his arm about her, and assure her tenderly that she need not be frightened, for he would take care of her; and it was quite as natural for her to lean on his shoulder, and say she was so glad he had come, and she thanked him so much. And somehow they kept that position a long time, even after the rain had abated, though there was a carriage waiting outside.

Finally, however, they went out, and were driven away.

"But, dear Hester," said Ned, when they were fairly on the road, "how could you engage yourself to him?"

"He told me that you were fond of his sister Jane, and were going to marry her," Hester said. "And I wanted to be as near you as I could."

The reader perceives that they have got along pretty well.

And so they rode through the brightening afternoon, and presently a sunbeam peeped through the lowered curtain, and, looking out, they saw all blue overhead.

"Out of darkness into light," said Ned, softly. "May it be an emblem of our life, dearest."

She said nothing in reply, but he read amen in her eyes.



SYDNEY ARCHER.

BY ADA L. FLETCHER.

"SYDNEY! Sydney Archer!"

The voice was an angry one, and rang sharply through the house from garret to cellar, until Mrs. Archer's boarders were fain to put their hands to their ears to save them for future use. The hard-faced woman, in whom "the milk of human kindness had turned to vinegar years before," saucy Cleo Marlin said, set down her broom, and went heavily up the stairs in the direction of her step-daughter's room.

"I really hope she wont find the child," said the same Cleo, from her luxurious position on the lounge in the cool sitting-room, where the ladies had gathered to wait for the gentlemen of the party, who were off on the inevitable fishing excursion. "She's a sulky little thing, but I can't bear to hear that woman abuse her. Why she don't run away, I can't see—"

"Where would she run to, Cleo? No one has more right to her services than her step-mother, and she has no friends," said Cleo's mother.

"She has no friends." The words floated up mournfully and clear, till they reached the ear of a little figure crouched on one of the highest limbs of the old oak that gave the house its inviting shady aspect. Two

great black eyes, that a moment before had flashed with triumph and anger, grew wet with bitters tears, and the little brown hands that had been clenched and shaken vindictively at Mrs. Archer's retreating figure, now clasped themselves together for the bowed head to rest upon. "No friends! No friends!" Ah, poor Sydney! She needed not this reminder of her forlorn condition. If there had ever been a gleam of sunshine in her fourteen years of life, it must have been before she was old enough for memory to retain it. There had been no bright threads in the web of her life since her father's death, which had happened too long ago for her to even remember his face, and she knew of her parents only from two narrow graves under the locust trees. Perhaps when Silas Archer had married his second wife she was no worse than the majority of untaught, undisciplined girls, but twelve years' conflict with poverty and disappointment had made her what we find her. She had never understood her husband's child, therefore had never loved her, and kind words were things Sydney only heard in dreams. Cleo had called her "sulky." Perhaps she was, or seemed so, for nature had taught her to clothe herself with this as with an armor; receiving nothing but un-

kindness, she expected nothing, and had schooled herself, child as she was, from very *pride* to appear indifferent and careless. But deep down beneath this crust was a heart warm and ardent, sensitive and loving, crying out hourly for the love and sympathy that had never yet blessed her life.

Sydney Archer had a soul as keenly alive to beauty as any artist or poet who has raved about the scenery of her native country—the “Switzerland of America,” East Tennessee; and it is a question with me whether any one, no matter how sordid or mean, could gaze upon her eternal hills and mountains, and flashing crystal river, listen to the thunder of her myriad waterfalls, and inhale the pure air redolent with the breath of her flowers and forests, without feeling stirring within him an instinctive admiration and awe, an involuntary feeling of worship for the Great Architect, of whom these are everlasting witnesses. Sydney’s first breath had been drawn in the old brown house on the rugged farm, so environed with hills that when one is there he wonders how he got there, and until this summer she had never had even a glimpse of the great world that lay beyond.

Of a peculiarly impressible disposition, the girl had grown to look upon the mountains and the rocks, the towering forest trees, and beautiful, boisterous, laughing, muttering Watanga River, as real friends, her only friends, more dear to her in their silent comforting presence than ever any living one had been.

Although they had neighbors, many girls of her own age, she had always felt herself not of them, and from the besetting sin of her nature, her inherent pride, had so carried herself among them, that one and all agreed in disliking one who, no better off than they, still seemed consciously superior to them. As for schools—alas for the children of East Tennessee’s mountain counties! Bright as many of those “diamonds in the rough” have proved themselves to be, as many minds among them as have toiled up to fame and distinction, still it seems as if the people were afraid of schools, afraid of books.

At fourteen Sydney Archer could read and write, just because she *would*, in the bleak winter season, walk four miles through the snow to the “old field” schoolhouse, with its rarely capable teacher. And many a storm there was at home because she would face the storm abroad, for the sake, as Mrs.

Archer said, of that foolish “readin’, ritin’ and cipherin’,” making herself sick for her to wait on.”

But Sydney had her way, and learned all that could be learned at the little log schoolhouse, and more still from nature’s teachings; and this little sunburned girl, with her bare brown feet, and dress of blue and white cotton “check,” had often grander visions of beauty within her restless brain than ever blessed college professor, or many a poet whom the world calls master.

The summer my story commences, several families in Nashville suddenly awoke to the fact that they were more certain to find health and happiness in the mountains of their native State than in the crowded watering-places of the North. Among them were the Marlins, who were influenced to come to the farmhouse “among the rocks” by an artist friend who had stopped there while on a sketching tour the year before. The family consisted of Colonel and Mrs. Marlin, two daughters, a niece and nephew, and a little grandchild, son of their only son, now a widower, absent in Europe. As aristocratic as a Southern family who could point to an unbroken line of ancestors with untarnished names and honors, and to hundreds of acres of rich land tilled by their own slaves could be, before the great Rebellion, still they were a warm-hearted, kind and generous family.

From the first, Cleo Marlin, as veritable a little romp as ever wore trailed dresses and carried herself gracefully in the drawing-room, longed to lay off her “fine ladyhood” and join Sydney in her tramp over the hills; but truth to tell, the gipsy stood in wholesome awe of her stately elder sister, proud Clara Marlin, whose delicate lip curved at the very thought of a Marlin trudging through the woods in search of flowers and berries. So she contented herself with sometimes stealing down to the kitchen where Sydney was at work, to say a kind word to the girl whose own pride kept her from soliciting friendliness from her superior in social rank, and who shrank from patronage as from a blow—standing aloof from even Cleo’s kind advances, because she thought they savored somewhat of condescension. But not so with little Genie, the pride and pet of the Marlin family. At four years old he was not yet worldly-wise enough to distinguish between a human heart, warm with love and kindness, beating beneath a cotton dress, and one of the same beneath satin or silk. So he

clung to Sydney, following her about her work, waiting patiently for the spare moment when she could take him up in her arms and steal off beneath the oak trees, to tell him a "booful story." Sydney had an "awful temper," Mrs. Archer said, and we are afraid truthfully; but at such times, when her face was aglow with the first human love her heart had ever known, it looked as pure and holy as any saint's in the calendar.

But we leave our heroine too long in the old oak tree. When her tears were over she descended and entered the house.

"You good for nothin'! I've the greatest mind I ever had in the world to give you a sound whippin'! That's what I have! Why didn't you answer me, say? Go to that churn now, and don't you let me see you stir away from there till that butter comes! It's a nice out that you can climb trees like a tomboy, as you are, and leave me all the work to do."

This was her greeting. Then what Cleo had called her "sulkiness" came into play. Though the red blood dyed her cheek for one instant, and there was a dangerous gleam in her eye, not a word was spoken. Her lids dropped sullenly over her eyes, and her lips drooped at the corners. No wonder her step-mother called her "ugly." A few energetic movements of the dasher brought the cream flying over the floor, for the demon of "Ill Temper" had full possession of her now, and it also brought her a sounding box on the ear from her angry stepmother.

"That'll teach ye, my lady, to ruin the floor I've nearly broke my back scrubbin' over to-day! Now git a cloth and wash that off!"

Sydney did not move nor answer. It was the first time in a year that she had received a blow, and she was almost wild with anger.

"Did you hear me, Sydney Archer?"

Still no reply, and the enraged woman seized her by the arm and shook her violently. Summoning all her strength, Sydney broke away, and with a cry that rang in Mrs. Archer's ears for months, rushed from the house. On—on! She cared not whither. Up the steep mountain side, clinging to brier or sapling, leaping from rock to rock, till her bare feet were bleeding and her hands torn and blistering; with only one thought in her heart—to escape from the house and from the woman who had struck her. At last, breathless and weary, she threw herself face downward in the moss and grass, beneath a towering pine tree. For an hour she lay

there almost unconscious. I dare not tell all the thoughts which surged through that untaught mind, for they were fearful. Do not judge her too harshly, mother with your happy gentle daughters by your side, whose lives have been shielded from the rough winds of heaven, if I tell you that this child of fourteen dared to think of ending her unhappy life then and there. Why she did not, she could never tell. She had a keen-edged knife in her pocket, one that the travelling artist of the year before had left with her, and which she carried with her everywhere, and she remembered years after the thrill that ran through her frame as she thought how easy death would be, and passed her fingers along its edge. Then, too, she thought of her friend the river—how sweet it would be to sink beneath its silvery waves and be at rest forever. But something restrained her, she knew not what. Not fear, for that feeling she had never known.

Sydney's mother had been what is called a "professor of religion" among these people. Was it not, perchance, one of the prayers from the dying mother's lips over her babe that kept the wayward headstrong girl from sending her own soul to its account before the bar of God? You will say, perhaps, that this was but a little thing to cause all this maelstrom of passion, but remember that Sydney's life was *all* this way—there had never been anything better, and as far into the future as she could see there was no hope of change. I do not deny that hers was a terrible temper; as terrible to herself as others, and no one had ever taught her to restrain it. I do not ask you to excuse her, only to pity.

CHAPTER II.

It was almost dark when Sydney raised her head from its pillow of moss and looked about her. While she was thinking, wondering in her misery what was to become of her wretched self, she was startled from her apathy by the sound of a faint cry far below her. What could it mean? Again it came, a little louder than before. She thought of all she had heard from the old mountaineers of the panther's pitiful cry, so like the human voice; then she thought it must be a stray lamb away from its mother. But no! Again! It is surely a child's sobbing cry! With the thought new strength was given her, and she sprang away in the direction of

the sound. The descent was easier than the ascent, but her progress was necessarily slow, because her uncertainty compelled her now and then to pause for the repetition of the cry. At last she became positive, and dashed through the underbrush, forgetting, in her zeal, her own discomforts. At last she entered a little ravine where the shadows grew denser. Then she recognized the voice that was crying, "Sydie! Sydie!" and in another moment she was kneeling on the ground, with the tiny form in her arms, and Genie's tear-wet face pressed to her own.

It was some moments before the child could give any explanation of his presence. Then she found that when grandma thought he was asleep on the porch, he had climbed down and tried to follow his grandfather, with whom he had begged to go that morning.

"And I dot furver and furver away, Sydie, and dot so tired, and couldn't find noffin or nobody, and I vent to seep, and it growed dark when I vaked; then I hollered and hollered for you. I *knowed* you'd come."

"Poor tired little Genie!" she said; "Sydie will take care of you."

But even as she spoke to comfort the child, she knew not what to do. She knew that they could not be very far from the bottom, for the child could not have climbed very far, but it was in a part of the mountain where even she had never been before, and, moreover, it was growing rapidly dark. Genie was tired out, and Sydney began to feel the reaction of all her excitement in her trembling limbs and aching head, and felt she could not carry him down, even if she knew the way. A heavy dew was falling, and on the mountain the nights are always chilly. The white linen suit in which Genie had looked so sweet that day, was but a poor protection to him now. She knew they would come to seek them soon, but in the meantime? Her plan was soon made, and laying the child—whose drowsy eyes would not stay open—back upon the grass and leaves, she proceeded to carry it out. She could not see for a very great distance round her, but she was enabled to find a pine knot or two, and other light wood of various kinds, which she placed together close to her little charge, breaking splinters from the pine with the knife she had thought of for so different a purpose an hour before. Now to search for a flintstone, of which her mountain life had taught her the value! Over and over the ground she went, until the search of her

numb fingers was rewarded, and she struck the little stone merrily against the steel blade of her knife. It is a work of time and patience, as every hunter will tell you, to kindle a fire with a flintstone; but Sydney knew it could be done, and never despaired. Soon her fire was roaring grandly, and Genie's blue eyes opened just long enough to say that it was "jolly;" then he went off into dreams again. Sydney sat there watching the shadows come and go as the firelight danced or waned, and thought that, even should she go back to the same dull routine of drudgery again, her life would be different, from the fact that she had done some good in the world.

Presently there came a shout, faintly borne to her eager ear, and she knew the men were searching the woods; but it might be hours before they found them. If she could only shout in reply loud enough for them to hear! She made the trial, and the mocking echoes sent her strained hoarse voice back to her. She might shout till daylight, and they would not hear her while in that ravine.

So she wrapped Genie in her apron, leaving her own neck and arms bare to the breeze and dews, and clambered up again in the dark until she reached a peak that she had seen towering above her by the glow of the firelight. Then she shouted, and to some purpose, for the returning shouts showed that she was heard. Still, her voice was so faint that she was fearful they would not know in what direction to search. The pine tree upon whose trunk she leaned, and which had been blasted by lightning years before, suggested an idea to her active mind which she lost no time in carrying out. Down again, as fast as her wearied feet would carry her, till she reached her fire and grasped a blazing pine-knot. But now Genie was awake, and pleaded for Sydie to take him with her. So she half led half carried him by the light of her torch up to the peak. At the root of the dead pine, among the dry leaves, she placed the torch, and with Genie stood off to watch the effect. The hungry flame leaped boldly up the gnarled trunk, lapping with its thousand fiery tongues the branches even to the top. Then a glad triumphant shout arose from the men below, whose tired anxious eyes saw the beacon, and guessed its meaning. But Sydney could shout no more. She saw the foremost man plant his foot on the edge of the peak, and with Genie in her arms, fell like a log at the

feet of Bruce Marlin, Genie's father, who had arrived only that evening, to find his darling lost.

CHAPTER III

Two weeks later the great mournful dark eyes of Sydney Archer opened dimly but consciously upon the world. She was too weak at first to even think; she only felt the comfort and tender care that surrounded her. The little hands, now white and fragile as Clara's own, were clasped upon the snowy counterpane. There were great hollows in the once rounded cheeks, but they were no longer burning with fever. She lay there, looking at the dainty knickknacks scattered about the pleasant room, wondering how she, Sydney Archer, came there, and half listening for the sharp voice of her stepmother, when instead, a soft cool hand was laid upon her brow, and Mrs. Marlin's sweet voice said:

"She has no fever now, I think, Bruce. There is a great change for the better."

A deep voice she had never heard before answered:

"Poor child! How much she must have suffered! Her life must have been a very unhappy one, mother, to cause such misery as her delirious words painted."

"How could it be otherwise, my son? She is certainly a remarkable child, with a very sensitive nature, and with the stepmother she has she could not be other than miserable."

Sydney could listen no longer, but opened her eyes languidly into the sweet face above her.

"Sydney, dear child!" And there was as much rejoicing over our poor little girl as if she had been the petted child of the Marlin household.

During the weeks of convalescence that followed, each vied with the other in petting and nursing the girl who had done so much for little Genie, now as well and saucy as ever. Either Mrs. Marlin or Cleo was always with her, and even the stately Clara was gentle and kind. Bruce and Genie were her constant companions, for Bruce was her physician, and Genie loved both too well to leave them. She told them all about that night on the mountain, how she came there, and the wicked thoughts that had tempted her; of the unknown but powerful influence that restrained her when she would have taken the life God had given her in her fit of

passionate anger. Sydney's words were simple, the grammar bad, and the accent rough and uncouth, yet there was not a dry eye in the little group when she had finished. She said nothing about the future, because she hardly dared think of it. At last she became well enough to walk unassisted down the stairs into the kitchen. It was the day before the Marlins were to leave, and Mrs. Archer was unusually busy and cross.

"I'm glad you're a gittin' about, Sydney," she said, "for there's a powerful sight of work to be done in this house, I can tell ye. You have had enough waitin' on now to be ready to work, I reckon. And you've got nobody to blame for this fit o' sickness but your own self. Rushin' off to the woods in a tantrum—"

Sydney did not stay to hear her finish, but walked giddily out into the yard, under the oaks. A torrent of bitter tears shook the slender frame.

"I wish I was dead! O, I wish I was dead! I wish they had let me die!" It was not anger that made the words come from her lips like a wail, it was despair.

"Sydney!" The voice was grave, but the hands that lifted her up to a seat beside the speaker were tender and loving. "You must not talk that way, my child. Do you not know it is very wicked?"

"I am wicked," she answered. "I do wish you had let me die. I have nothing to live for here—I can't!" And she burst into tears again.

"Sydney, dear little girl! Did you think we were going to let you live on as you have in the past? Did you think I could? Do you not know that if it had not been for your efforts on the mountain that night I might never have found my boy—never until it was too late to see the light of his blue eyes? Could I leave you, do you think, to the living death that I know would be yours here? No, Sydney, you are my little girl now—my mother's and mine—Genie's sister; and we are going to take you away with us to-morrow."

She almost rose to her feet in her excitement, then turned and gazed steadily into the blue eyes that met hers so kindly and truthfully. Then she caught her breath, in a manner peculiar to herself, and said:

"Dr. Marlin, can it—do you—"

"Ask Gene if I don't," he said, laughingly. "Here, Gene!" And he caught the boy by his flowing golden hair and elevated him to his shoulder. "Tell Sydnie, Gene, what she is going to be hereafter?"

"Sydie doin' to be Denie's sister!" he answered, promptly and triumphantly.

"Why?" asked his father, proceeding with the catechism, and quietly enjoying Sydney's expressive face.

"Tause Dod helped, Sydie find Denie when he lost on dreat bid mountain, and dive him back to papa."

This was followed by a very emphatic hug, given impartially to both, and the child sprang away after a yellow butterfly.

"Now, Sydney, you believe us, don't you?"

"I don't know how to thank you, Doctor Marlin—"

"Neither do I desire thanks, Sydney. I just want this sadness out of your eyes and these terrible wicked wishes out of your heart. Think where would your soul have been, dear, if God had answered your prayer! I am going to send you to school, Sydney, and if you learn there—improve in both mind and heart—it will be all my mother and I can ask. Come, I want to go and talk to your stepmother now."

Like one walking in a dream, Sydney followed him into the kitchen, clinging to the hand that had raised her from despair to joy and hope. They found Mrs. Archer ironing, and evidently taking a week's spite out on the innocent clothes.

"Mrs. Archer," said Dr. Marlin, as politely as if Queen Victoria herself stood before him, "can you spare me a moment?"

She set her iron down upon the stove, and said, ungraciously:

"I s'pose so."

"You know," he continued, "that Sydney Archer saved Eugene Marlin's life. Of course I feel as if nothing I could do for her would be too much. So my mother and I have decided to adopt her, if you have no objections. She is quite willing to go with us."

Mrs. Archer actually gasped for breath, and sank into the nearest chair. What her thoughts were I do not know. Whether there was still a tender feeling in the seemingly callous heart for her dead husband's child, I do not know, either. Perhaps there was. Perhaps, at that moment, she remembered the hour when Silas Archer placed his two years' old baby in her arms, and asked her to be a mother to the child, and remembered, too, what kind of a mother she had been. For sweet humanity's sake, let us believe this was so. But whatever emotion stirred her heart, it was over in a moment, and she arose and took up the iron again.

"I'm shore it's nothin' to me," she said, her voice sounding harder than ever. "If your mother wants to have the worry and trouble of the gal, with her awful temper, dreadful knows, I'm willin'."

And Bruce Marlin led Sydney away up stairs to his mother's room, where she was greeted warmly and welcomed into the bosom of the Marlin family. Even Clara bent her queenly head and kissed the pale cheek, for whatever "Bruce and mamma" did, with Clara was right. Cleo, half wild with delight, caught her in her arms and gave her the "genuine East Tennessee hug," she said, then took her off to her room to show her the stylish travelling suit they had been preparing for her. In spite of her backwoods' rearing, Sydney's pride prevented her from betraying ignorance ever, and though her mind may have been filled with wonder as to the use of the various articles Cleo told her she was to wear, her face showed only gratitude. Already the cultivated and refined atmosphere about her was beginning to have its influence.

And the woman down stairs? If the hard lip quivered when she thought of the girl about to leave her home without a single regret, to whom she had never given a mother's kiss, or even a kind word—if a single tear dropped upon the nicely ironed shirt-bosom, why, there was nobody by to betray her.

CHAPTER IV.

It is time now that I told you something of the family of which Sydney was to be a member. Though I have said little of Colonel Marlin, you must not think that he was a secondary consideration in his family. He was just what you would call a "a fine old Southern gentleman," a type of the dead and gone chivalry. He gave little Sydney Archer as warm a kiss when he welcomed her into his family as he did his favorite Cleo. Mrs. Marlin was one of earth's angels; women who seem sent among us to show us the perfect beings God designed us all to be. "Her children rise up and call her blessed. Her husband also, and he praiseth her."

A word for Bruce himself, since he will have much to do with the formation of the mind and character of our heroine. "A gentleman and a Christian," were the words of praise given him by one of his patients in his native city, and they were echoed by a hun-

-dred hearts he had made happy. As courteous and as chivalrous as one of the knights of old, yet unlike our modern "carpet knights," who hide a false and treacherous heart beneath the flowers of glib flattery, he was upright and honorable to an extreme degree. Proud? yes, proud of his spotless name and honor, and proud without ostentation of his title as a "Christian." Not proud of his wealth and position, only glad of them, because of the good he could do by their aid. With a strong searching intellect, cultivated to its highest degree by study and travel, a naturally fiery temper, controlled by his invincible will and sense of duty, he had a heart as tender as a woman's, where suffering was concerned, but unbending as granite against folly or crime. He was well calculated to guide the faltering footsteps of poor Sydney Archer out of the mire and clay of ignorance and passion, up to the heights of a noble womanhood. I fear it will disappoint many of my girl readers when I say that Bruce Marlin was not what they would call a handsome man. But a strong pure soul looked out of his clear blue eyes, Genius had placed her seal upon the broad white brow, and his life attested his goodness. Married at the age of twenty-one, to a beautiful girl whom he had loved from childhood, but two years of happiness were granted him. Then God took his treasure home, and left him only frail little *Genie* to fill his heart. That he suffered greatly his friends could only guess, for the grave sweet kindness of manner that had characterized him from childhood was unaltered. He did not rush abroad to seek forgetfulness, but found balm in steady work at home; then went to Europe to find rest. And now at twenty-eight there was no one quicker to appreciate the mirthful joyous side of life than he, because he had known what it was to suffer and be strong.

Of Cleo and Clara we have said enough, and as for the niece and nephew, who have nothing more to do with our story, they were a quiet and well-behaved young lady and gentleman, so far as I know, and we will let them go back to their home in the far South as quietly as they left it.

One morning in the early gray dawn, for the first time in her life, Sydney stood at the little depot ten miles distant, and watched the headlight of the engine that was to bear her into her new life, drawing nearer and nearer. There had been no tears at the part-

ing with her home and mother (what a bitter sarcasm the words seemed to her!), but now her eyes were dim as she said farewell to mountain and river, and thought of the changes her life would know before she gazed upon them again. But Cleo gave no one time for tears, little chatterbox that she was. There could not be a greater contrast than the two girls presented, and more than one pair of eyes in the crowded car that day turned to look at them as they sat together, Cleo, with her golden hair floating about the rosy dimpled face running over with mischief, and her laughing blue eyes rejoicing in her sixteen years of unclouded happiness; and Sydney, with her dark cheek yet pallid from her recent illness, and her black hair clinging in short silky curls about her head, the great slumberous midnight eyes gazing into the future, the sensitive mouth with its curve of pride.

So silent was Sydney that Bruce began to wonder if she were always to be so; if nothing could rouse her face into the beauty of soul he had seen it wear. But his doubt was answered before they reached the city. As they swept around Lookout Mountain, the moon had just risen and threw an exquisite light over the scene that I have never seen surpassed in painting or reality. So high above that they seemed to reach beyond the moon, towered Lookout's Peaks, and far below ran the placid Tennessee, so clear that one could see the pebbly bottom through ten feet of crystal water. Elsewhere as turbulent as any of its sister streams, here it steals silently along as if in very awe of the grandeur of the mountains.

In entire forgetfulness of danger, Sydney leaned from the window, drinking in the glory of the scene, and Bruce gradually drew her into conversation, inspired by this, until he learned more of her nature than he had ever known before. Morning found them in Nashville, and the great house on Vauxhall Street was thrown open and made cheerful. To Sydney it was like a new world, but she readily adapted herself to her surroundings, and grew healthful and happy, and at peace, in this Christian household, among people who loved her, and strove to make the orphan feel at home.

CHAPTER V.

A YEAR has passed away before we introduce Sydney to your notice again; a year of hard study and decided improvement to her.

At first it had been planned to send her to the same select school from which Clara and Cleo had graduated, but Mrs. Marlin foresaw the mortification it would have given the sensitive girl to find herself so far behind other girls of her own age in mental acquirements. So, for the first year she studied at home under Mrs. Marlin's own direction, and that of her son. Sydney learned rapidly, her mind gained new powers of acquiring and retaining knowledge every day, and her tireless will quailed before no task, be it ever so difficult, until Bruce told Cleo she must look to her laurels. The orphan was so happy that every breath was a thanksgiving to God, for from Bruce she had learned to know, as a friend, the "Giver of every good and perfect gift." "Rome was not built in a day," and Sydney had the faults of fourteen years to eradicate; but though it cost her many a bitter struggle, Bruce saw with delight that she was gradually conquering self. He was always on guard to help her, with a warning word or look, and his smile of praise was reward enough for her, since he never praised her unless she deserved it. Her face lost the sullen look it had worn under her stepmother's rule, and the eyes seemed no longer brooding over sorrow, but shone with the light of a heart at rest and a mind at work. The rounded cheek bloomed like one of her own wild mountain roses, and happiness made the whole face beautiful.

Although she thoroughly enjoyed the new life, the old one was not forgotten. The mine of poetry that was in her soul yielded fruit now and then in reminiscences of her mountain home, which, crude as they were, often startled Bruce by their original beauty. He did not encourage this "rhyming," as he called it, for he knew there was time enough for that, and he wanted a solid basis to her education. This summer they did not go to the mountains, but travelled through the North, for Sydney's sake; and two years of school would not have improved her more than this season of travel and observation.

In October they came back to the city, and Sydney was hard at work again, now a member of the Nashville Female Seminary, as a day scholar, and taking rank by the side of girls whose whole lives had been spent in school. Clara was married, and Cleo deep in the gayeties of a Nashville winter, so that Sydney was a great deal of company to Bruce and the old folks.

One evening Cleo announced her intention

of staying at home; she was tired, she declared, with parties, and wanted to sit down by the fire with her head in mamma's lap, as she used to when Clara was gone to balls, and let Bruce read to her. So the petted child had her way, and they all gathered round the little wood fire that Mrs. Marlin was old-fashioned enough to like in her room. Bruce declared that Sydney must have her quiet hour for study, "in spite of the invasion of this vandal," with a sly pinch of Cleo's cheek. So he took Genie off to a corner for his lesson, Cleo took her position on the rug in delicious idleness, Mrs. Marlin almost nodded in her great easy-chair, Sydney took her algebra to the drop-light to study, and for an hour there was no sound in the room save the rattle of Colonel Marlin's newspaper as he turned it over. The golden firelight flickered and danced over the sweet home scene, making our Sydney's heart glow with pleasure, almost without knowing the reason why.

"Sydney!" abruptly said Cleo, in her quick way, "I've always wondered why you had such a queer name for a girl. Do you know yourself?"

"You may speak, Sydney," called Bruce. "Your hour is up."

Called back in such sudden fashion from the realm of equations and unknown quantities, Sydney looked up rather bewildered, and Cleo had to repeat the question. When Bruce spoke she put her book away with alacrity, and knelt by Cleo on the rug, where Genie soon curled down between them, and Bruce stood in the background and admired the picture.

"My name, did you say, Cleo? I just know this about it. I found an old letter once from my uncle Sydney Blake, thanking my mother for having named her little girl for him. That's all. I don't even know whether my uncle is living or not."

"Sydney—what did you say, my dear?" asked Bruce, almost breathlessly.

"Sydney Blake, my mother's brother," she answered, turning a pair of startled eyes upon him.

"Why, my child, Sydney Blake was one of my best friends while in Europe. Are you sure about the name?"

"I think I have the letter," she said. "I kept it because it had my mother's writing on it. I will get it." And she left the room.

Cleo had risen to her feet in her interest, and Colonel Marlin laid down his newspaper,

for they had all heard Sydney Blake spoken of by Bruce. Sydney returned and handed the letter to Bruce, with a very pale face. It was old and time-stained, but one look at the handwriting was enough to convince Bruce. The name was signed in full, and beneath the mother had written, "Dear Sydney! If I could only leave my babe with him!"

"She died the week after," said Sydney's tremulous voice.

"I am so glad for you, little girl; Sydney Blake is truly one of nature's noblemen. I have often heard him speak of his dead sister, but never knew her husband's name. I will write him immediately of the great joy in store for him. Are you not glad, Sydney?"

"I'm not," said Genie, stoutly, "for he'll be taking Sydnie away from us, the first thing we know."

There had been no joy in Sydney's face, and now she surprised them all by bursting into tears and burying her face in Mrs. Marlin's lap.

"What is it, dear?" said the lady, kindly smoothing the silky curls away from the dark brow. "Are you not glad to find your uncle?"

The girl looked up with some of the angry light of old in her eyes.

"I do not know him—I do not love him! Why has he never sought me before?" she said, bitterly. "I am so happy here. I'm afraid—"

"Come with me, Sydney," said Bruce, calmly. "I want to talk with you a while."

The cheeks grew a deeper crimson and the lips took on their old ominous droop.

"I don't want to hear about my uncle," she said. "He doesn't care for me, or he would never have left me to live as I lived till you found me. I will never love him—"

"Then go up to your room, Sydney, and sleep off your anger."

Without a word she turned away and went to her room, but not to sleep. Bitter tears wet her lonely pillow. She was so happy here that she could not bear to even think of leaving the quiet harbor for the unknown ocean. Then she wept, too, over her own weakness in giving way to her feelings. The next morning she went to Bruce with great tears in her eyes, and an earnest prayer for the future trembling on her lips, and he gave her the kiss of forgiveness after he had talked to her long and earnestly about her fault. Then he said:

"Were you afraid your uncle would not

love you quite as well as we do? Let me show you his picture, and read you his letter, that you may know how much he stands in need of your love, and I know you cannot withhold it."

The photograph he gave her was one of a noble manly face, with dark eyes like her own, with only the fiery light in their depths dimmed by time and care. A sad face, with an intense longing in every feature, a broad open brow which sorrow, not age, had deeply marked. The letter was just such a letter as one might expect from the picture.

"I am a rich man, Bruce," he wrote, "but of what avail are my riches? I know you will answer from the bounteous charity of your heart, 'Give unto the poor.' I know this, old friend, and do try to act only as steward of my fortune, but it needs something more than this to make me a contented or happy man. I want something to love—something to love me. I shall never marry—you only know the reason—but I think I shall go to my native mountains and take one of the numberless ones who I know are longing, even as I and my sweet sister longed in the years gone by, for the love, and sympathy, and higher life, I can so easily give him."

An intense feeling of sympathy for the lonely man came into Sydney's heart as she read, and so she could say quite freely as she gave the letter back to Bruce:

"Write to him, Dr. Marlin, and say that if his little niece can fill the void in his heart she will."

"There spoke my own brave noble Sydney," said Bruce. "It will be hard, very hard, little girl, for us to give you up, when you have grown so dear to us, and I know it will be hard for you; but then, you know, your uncle has the dearest right. His life has been a lonely, loveless one for many years, and the early part of it was a hand-to-hand struggle with the world. He has won riches and honor now, but his life is an empty one, as he says, because he has a large generous heart, and longs for some object near and dear to him upon which to lavish his love and wealth. But there is the office-bell for me, Sydney, and it's school time for you. Get your hat and I'll drive you round. And don't stndy about this too much, dear. Leave it with God, and you know it will be right."

Bruce wrote, and the weeks that followed before an answer could be received were anxious, feverish ones for them all. Sydney

had grown so into the heart of this family, loved them all so dearly, and was so loved in return, that none of them could bear to think of a separation, though all felt that it would surely come.

Bruce had to rebuke Cleo and Genie several times for their expressions of dissatisfaction, which only made it harder for Sydney, but he found himself wishing several times that Sydney Blake would be willing to leave his niece in the home they had given her.

At last, one day just as the seminary girls came out on the grounds for their afternoon recess, and Sydney sat alone beneath a large maple, apart from the merry chattering group of classmates, where she had not many friends, because they all thought her proud and haughty, when she was only reticent and thoughtful, Bruce drove his span of grays to the gate and beckoned to her. She had almost given the letter up, but one look at Bruce's face was enough. She knew he had news of importance for her, and, regardless of rules, she sprang up and started across the lawn, when she was arrested by the low voice of one of the lady teachers.

"Miss Archer," she said, "will return to the schoolroom, losing her recess for want of ladylike decorum."

For a moment she hesitated; then her angry impatience would be controlled no longer.

"Miss Leigh will see that I cannot comply with her command, since my guardian has commanded otherwise." And she walked swiftly away.

Bruce, who had heard it all, sprang out of the phaeton, and throwing the reins to a little newsboy who stood near, met her at the gate.

"You must come back with me, Sydney, and ask Miss Leigh's pardon for your want of respect. Could you not have explained the matter to her without such an exhibition of temper?"

The girl turned pale, then flushed scarlet, and her breath came and went hurriedly as she laid her hand upon his arm.

"I can't—indeed, Dr. Marlin, I can't; anything else I will do, but I cannot ask her pardon!"

"Cannot you do anything that is right, Sydney? I do not command this, I ask it of you. I appeal to your sense of right. If you do not think you ought to do this, we will return to the phaeton. Decide for yourself."

The struggle was sharp but short. He saw the red lips compress themselves firmly, but

could not see her eyes, for the drooping lashes hid them.

"May I go alone?" she said, at length.

"Certainly, if you wish it."

She left his side and walked back through the group of curious girls until she reached Miss Leigh. He could not hear what she said, but saw from the look of pleased surprise on the lady's face that it was satisfactory. He only said, when he assisted her to her seat, "He that controlleth his own spirit is better than he that taketh a city." She looked timidly up at him, and meeting his reassuring smile, said:

"Every day is a battle-ground with me, and I am rarely victor. Will I ever be entirely so?"

"If you trust to your own powers, Sydney, you never will; but you know where to go for strength. You see I was anxious particularly for this battle, because I could not take you to your uncle in an angry mood."

"My uncle, Dr. Marlin?"

"Yes; instead of a letter he has come himself to claim my little girl. He is waiting very impatiently for you at the City Hotel."

Then, to calm her nervous excitement, he told her how Sydney Blake explained his apparent indifference about his niece; how her father had written him that he dared not hope for the baby's life after its mother's death, and as he had heard no more, he had taken it for granted that the little Sydney had joined her mother, and had never visited his native land since, because there were no ties to draw him back.

At length they dashed up to the hotel, and Sydney followed Bruce to the room where her uncle awaited them. He took her hand and led her forward. Some one caught her in his arms, but for a moment her eyes were too dim to see her uncle's face. She forgot all her apprehensions, forgot her dread of being taken away from those who were so dear to her, remembering only that this was her dead mother's brother, her only living relative; and she buried her face on his shoulder in an excess of joy. Bruce withdrew and left them together, happy in his friend's happiness, yet with a strange pang at his heart, when he thought that he was no longer *first*, in the love of his little mountain girl.

CHAPTER VI.

ONLY two weeks were given Sydney in her adopted home. Her uncle's health demand-

ed travel, and he could not bear Sydney out of his sight a moment. She was so like her mother, he said, over and over again. Sydney learned to love him dearly, even in so short a time. How could she help it, when her slightest wish to him was law? when he could not endure to have her will thwarted for a moment? Bruce saw this, and trembled for Sydney, because he felt that all the good seed that had been sown and so sedulously guarded and nourished, would soon be choked by the weeds of passion and pride, if she were indulged so much. He talked to her very earnestly before she left him, and bade her remember his parting words. "Crush your tempter, Sydney. Have will and womanhood enough about you to be mistress of yourself."

He also talked to her uncle about this, who, clear-headed lawyer that he was, was so exultingly proud of the little waif that had been borne to him out of the wreck of all he held dear, that he could see no blemish in her. He listened to Bruce patiently, agreed with him in reasoning and theory, yet was directly opposite in practice.

The parting was a sad one for all. How bitter to Sydney, no one knew but herself, for she had a strange foreboding that it would be years before she felt the peace and quietness of home about her again. Bruce said but little, for he saw that a word from him would entirely upset her self-control, but his heart was very heavy as the hour drew nigh for her departure. Cleo was inconsolable, and poor little Genie, whom Bruce could never induce to look kindly upon "Sydie's uncle," clung with both arms about her neck, and at last his father bore him away sobbing as if his heart would break. Gentle Mrs. Marlin pressed the girl to her mother-heart, and whispered a prayer above her, with a whispered "God bless you, my child!" Bruce and Cleo went with them to the depot, Cleo vowing all the way, in her extravagant fashion, that she "couldn't feel worse if she was going to her own funeral," yet being the only merry one in the crowd. Sydney herself was composed and pale; but when she caught the last glimpse of Bruce's face at the car window, her enforced calmness gave way, and as her uncle only petted, instead of restraining her, she made both him and herself miserable on their first day's journey. But nature reasserted herself, and after they entered the old world, her uncle's tired, travel-weary spirit found new zest and

enjoyment, in her delight; and ere long, as they grew better acquainted, they found a never-failing pleasure together, Sydney learning daily from her uncle's varied experience, and he in watching her expanding mind, and glorying in its wealth of poesy.

For a year they travelled through Europe, Sydney revelling in the beauty of the scenery, and storing her mind with legends and poetry; yet her practical education was all the while neglected, and more than all, and worse than all, she forgot the education of her soul. Sydney Blake was a pure, noble, high-minded man, but not a Christian. He believed, of course, in the existence of a God, a supreme controlling power of the universe, but of him as a Father, a near and dear friend, he knew nothing. He never thought of him as one to whom he could fly in every sorrow; "a very present help in the time of trouble." Of course, after a year of constant intercourse, our Sydney imbibed the same principles almost unconsciously. She lost the tender reverence, the love of a child for its parent, toward God, that had been hers naturally, and which Bruce had endeavored to strengthen; forgot to go to him with every trial, and learned to look upon him only as a being afar off; too high above earth to stoop to interest himself in the troubles of one of its frailest children. She received letters from Bruce regularly, and answered them, but the childish confidence changed as the year went by, and he to whom she had once entrusted all the thoughts of her impulsive soul, now could only guess at them from chance expressions. He could not tell whether she was conquering her old enemies or not; her letters spoke nothing of this, nor did those of her uncle. He dwelt continually upon her genius, her beauty, and her affectionate care for him, while she gave glowing descriptions of the countries through which they passed.

At last, weary with travel, they came to Paris to spend the winter, and there Sydney's first temptation to yield to anger came; as hitherto her uncle had given her no chance to show her temper, for he was proud of the willful ways which were as beautiful and as dangerous, as the hectic flush on an invalid's cheek. But now roused by Bruce's letters, which seemed to reproach him for caring so little for the education of his niece, he told her one day that he had determined to send her to one of the common schools of the city. Sydney demurred in her pettish

way. She did not want to go to school, she was learning just as much in travel, she could not leave her uncle.

"But you must, my darling. You must bother this little head with mathematics and philosophy. Bruce says that your letters show your need of such discipline."

The old burning flush came back to her cheek, and her eyes flashed angrily.

"I don't see what Dr. Marlin has to do with it, Uncle Sydney. I am sorry he doesn't like my letters, and won't trouble him with them any longer, but I shall not go to a convent, just because he says so." And she turned hastily to leave the room.

"Sydney!" She never heard that ringing angry tone to her uncle's voice before, and paused abruptly. "I beg of you to return to your seat," he said, slowly. For an instant she hesitated, then said:

"I wish to go to my room, uncle."

"And I wish you to remain."

Without another word she took her seat.

"I am both grieved and astonished, Sydney, at your conduct. What has Bruce Marlin done to deserve your anger and contempt? Yet your manner evinces both, when he has proved himself your best friend over and over again. You will certainly enter St. Marie's convent next week, as pupil and boarder, and I wish to hear of no more reluctance. You may be certain that neither Dr. Marlin nor your uncle desires anything but your welfare."

"Am I at liberty to go to my room, sir?" was her sole answer. And as he answered in the affirmative, she swept from the room in a storm of childish anger, leaving him for the first time without a good-night kiss.

Back and forth through her room Sydney walked that night, filled with bitter thoughts against Bruce and her uncle, but feeling more mortification than anger, that Bruce had found fault with her letters. But by-and-by the storm spent itself, and as a little child she cried herself to sleep.

For several days there was a coolness in the intercourse between uncle and niece that was perceptible and painful to both. Then Sydney's better nature triumphed, and one evening she followed her uncle out on the little balcony that overlooked the quiet street in suburban Paris, where they had taken lodgings, and slipped her hand in his.

"Can you forgive your little girl, Uncle Sydney? She is so lonely without your love."

He caught her in his arms tenderly.

"Forgive you, darling? I am almost tempted to ask your forgiveness for not bearing with your childish faults more leniently."

"But they are not childish faults. They are very grave ones, and I want you to help me conquer them."

"I will try, dearest. Are you ready to forgive Bruce, also?"

"Dr. Marlin does not desire my forgiveness," she answered, with still a touch of haughtiness, and said no more.

On the following day she was regularly initiated into the rules and regulations of St. Marie's convent, and after the first week entered heart and soul into her studies, applying her earnest energetic nature to conquering difficulties in the road to knowledge with the same zeal she had displayed in travelling. Of course she learned no religion here. The beautiful mystical ceremonies of the Catholic Church pleased and gratified the æsthetical part of her nature—the music, the incense, the white-robed priests—they did not satisfy her heart, and her life was not a happy one, because of a restless longing for something, she knew not what.

During the two years she remained in the convent, Sydney heard but little of her friends the Marlins. Bruce's letters were of course interdicted, and Cleo was so "flighty" there was no dependence to be put on her as a correspondent. In restless unhappy moments, she often thought regretfully of the calm quiet hours she had spent with one ever ready to speak words of kindly counsel. But she had never answered his last letter, and was now too proud to send even a word through her uncle. So they drifted apart, with the years, until Sydney, beautiful Sydney Archer, with her wondrous dark eyes, and olive cheek glowing with the roses of youth and health, with her eager, passionate, impulsive spirit, which not even convent life could tame or tone down to the conventional standard; and alas! with inherent pride, relying upon her own strength of will to bear her over the shoals and quicksands of life, instead of upon omnipotent love, stood upon the threshold of a glorious attractive womanhood.

CHAPTER VII.

SYDNEY BLAKE had been so long abroad that Paris was now as much home to him as

any spot on earth, and his reputation and wealth gave him a prominent position in the fashionable world. When Sydney left school, there was no lack of gayeties for her. She was introduced into society by Madame Vaulx, who was an old friend of her uncle, a woman of the world, still brilliant and handsome, and once a star in beauty-loving Paris. Charmed at once by our Sydney's beauty of face and figure, so unlike anything she had ever seen in France, it was a great delight to her to introduce the young girl into the gay world she knew so well. Were I to say that Sydney did not enjoy all the parties and balls, the flattery and adulation that followed her *debut*, it would not be true; for, unlike as she was in nature to the many butterfly girls about her, I contend that it is not in human nature, especially girl-nature, no matter how exalted, not to enjoy such a life as Sydney's. She enjoyed it all, even to the elegant apparel it was her uncle's delight to lavish upon her. The poetical elements in her nature revelled in the bright colors, filmy cloudlike laces, and glittering jewels of her toilet, even as she did in the glow of an Italian sunset, and she loved to gaze upon her own loveliness, even as upon a beautiful painting or statue. Often, indeed, she would look upon her dress of snowy satin and rich silk, and wonder, "Is this indeed I?" The barefoot Sydney of four years before, in her dress of blue and white cotton check, bringing the cows home from pasture, or gathering wood on the mountain side? But she never shrank from this side of the picture, dark as were some of the shadows about it. She rapidly became a favorite, not only among the fashionable friends of her chaperone, but also in the bright, select, literary circle that moved with her uncle. Her beauty and grace attracted one, her genius and gift of expression the other.

Sydney Blake was very proud of his niece, but his letters to Bruce brought only sadness to his friend's heart, for Bruce himself had been long enough in Paris to know just what the society was in which Sydney was adrift. He did not fear the influence of Madame Vaulx's set so much as that of the men and women of her uncle's *coterie* with their brilliant, witty, cultivated, but doubting, skeptical, godless minds. So he trembled for Sydney, knowing her nature so well, but he had voluntarily given up his guardianship of the girl, and now of course had no voice in her career. He could only wait, trusting that

the good would triumph over the evil, even among such untoward influences. But he could still pray for one, who needed, more than he could guess, the earnest prayers of a Christian heart.

Among the many men of culture and power whom Sydney met at her uncle's rooms, was a Spaniard, by name Leon Juarez. She was both attracted and repelled by this man, from the very first. When in his presence, listening to his voice, almost unnatural in its musical sweetness, gazing into the black eyes that almost burned her face with their lightning flashes of wit and genius, listening to his conversation, showing the depth of his mind tinged with a subtle sarcasm, she yielded to his wonderful magnetic influence, and felt nothing but admiration. But when alone, an undefinable feeling of dread and repulsion possessed her spirit, whenever she thought of him. Yet day by day he sought her society, won by her freshness and innocence of mind, so foreign to his own nature, and day by day the baleful influence deepened, until Sydney sank beneath it, believing that she loved this man—an avowed infidel, whose life had known no law, save that of his own will, when alas, it was never love! Only the feeling that makes the innocent birdling of the forest hover and flutter above the horrible coiled serpent beneath its nest, and at last, without effort or volition, drop down to fall a victim at last to the insatiable appetite of its charmer!

Do you ask where were Sydney's own native goodness and purity, that should have revolted at the very thought of love for such a man? Ah, have you never known in your experience, over and over, these very traits overcome by a stronger will? You see, to the little bird, the green eyes of the serpent, horrible as they seem to you, are filled with fascination, and the corruscating spots of green, and gold, and blue upon the loathsome body, that fill your very soul with terror, possess a nameless attraction. Leon Juarez had as yet shown to Sydney only the beautiful side of his nature, though the face of the fiend peered forth sometimes, making her shrink and tremble without a seemingly sufficient reason. "Perfect love casteth out fear;" therefore that cannot be love that is not trust. Tainted with infidelity as was the very air she breathed, she shrank not from it when so delicately clothed and subtly administered as by this man. If her soul had been intrenched in the armor

of christianity, with an unfaltering belief in the goodness of God as a father and friend, and unceasing prayer as a shield, she would have been safe; but her education and surroundings had thrown down all such barriers, and she was just adrift. God help all such souls!

You may better ask where was her uncle's watchful care? He loved his niece better than any living thing, but neither had he the touchstone of a Christian character that so infallibly tells the pure gold from gilded brass, and because this man was charming to him, he brought him home, made him friend and companion for his darling, forgetting that what might not harm him, would blast the very soul of an innocent girl.

Then the habits of a lifetime are not easily broken up, and Sydney Blake's whole nature was absorbed in his books, his writing and his fame. But at last his eyes were opened. Shrewd Madame Vault, seeing which way things were tending, broached the subject one day when Sydney and Leon had gone into the drawing-room together.

"Sydney Blake, *mon ami*, what do you know of our friend Don Leon?"

He looked up from his book, and waited for the question to be repeated. Then he laughed, and said:

"As much as I desire to know, Madame Vault. He is talented and entertaining, he interests me; what more do I want?"

"Perhaps that may suit *you*," said madame, with a little lift of her black eyebrows peculiar to herself. "But I should think you'd want to know more about the lover of your niece, 'belle Sydnie,' and the man she loves!"

The book fell to the floor with a jar as Sydney Blake sprang to his feet.

"Madame Vault! Explain yourself! Sydney Archer love Leon Juarez? What can you mean?"

"Just what I said, Monsieur Blake," said Madame Vault, imperturbably. "It is 'all the talk,' as you Yankees say, among our set, that 'La Belle Americaine' is soon to wed with Don Leon Juarez!"

"But you surely cannot believe it yourself, madame—"

"Why not?" queried the lady. "They are so much together. Leon is handsome, agreeable and your friend, and Syduie, '*tres charmante*,' and your heiress."

With an American oath that set madame's delicate teeth on edge, Sydney Blake gave

the bell rope a jerk that threatened to bring it from its fastenings.

"Tell Mademoiselle Archer that I wish to see her in the library," he said to the servant that appeared, then walked back to his seat, trembling in every limb with emotion.

"You are wrong, my friend, you are rash, you should wait," pleaded the lady.

"Don't talk to me," he said, angrily, "of waiting! Have I not been blind, and waited long enough? It is time to act when the wolf has entered the fold."

The interview between the uncle and niece was a stormy one. Each possessed the same unconquerable will, but Sydney Blake felt, before it was over, that his actions were ill-judged. I believe that if Sydney had been left alone, the strange love she felt for Juarez would have died a natural death, that the good would have triumphed over the evil in the strife that was going on within her soul, but opposition only strengthened her will and determination. The result was that her uncle forbade her seeing or meeting Juarez, and that she as firmly declared that whenever the man whose promised wife she was, desired to see her, she would meet him. And thus matters stood when she swept from the library to her own room, her cheeks aflame with anger, and the white teeth pressing the crimson under lip till it was blood-stained.

Sydney Blake met Juarez with danger in his eyes, heaping bitterest curses upon the false friend who had stolen his dearest treasure, and forbidding him again to enter the house or see his niece. Leon's politeness never left him, though his handsome mouth curved with a sneer of pride and self-confidence. "He loved Monsieur Blake's niece, and she loved him; what harm was there in that?" But Sydney would not hear a word, and sternly closed the door in his face.

The next day, as Sydney sat alone in her room, her maid brought her a note in the flowing Spanish hand she knew so well, telling her of her uncle's commands, and begging her to let him see her for just a moment at the house of a mutual friend—he was waiting her there then. As if walking in her sleep the girl rose and threw her shawl about her, and moved toward the door with strange faltering steps. Her hand was upon the latch, when suddenly there came a rush as of angel wings about her; the same strange emotion that had stayed her hand on that night upon the mountain compelled her now

to pause, and the voice of the mother she had never seen seemed to whisper the words of another, "Crush your tempter, Sydney! Have will and womanhood enough to be mistress of yourself." And as she shrank back, burying her face in her hands, the angel voice seemed to chant "Saved! Saved!" as it winged its flight again to heaven!

Below, Sydney Blake sat in his lonely room, and great tears coursed down his furrowed cheeks. Was it for this he had waited and hoped during the two years of his darling's absence? *Could* she love this man more than she did the uncle whose tender care and love had been about her all these years? O blind, blind dolt that he was, that he did not guard her more jealously! While he was buried in dreariest self-communion, a servant brought him a card. As he read the name, his whole demeanor changed from despondency to joy and hope. "Thank God!" he said, more fervently than before in years; and with all the agility of youth restored, sprang past the astonished servant, threw open the door of the salon, and stood face to face with Bruce Marlin!

CHAPTER VIII

I CANNOT describe the meeting between the old friends, nor the conversation that followed. Bruce's presence was explained by a simple desire on his part to see Europe and his friends there, but most of all by a strange feeling that just then his "little Sydney" needed and wanted him. When he had heard what his friend had to tell him, he understood it all.

"You will not see her till to-night, Bruce," said Sydney Blake. "Madame Vaulx has a reception to-night, and I want you to see her then."

So Bruce waited. When the magnificent salon was crowded, and the band was breathing forth sweetest strains, Bruce took his position in a distant alcove to wait for Sydney. Suddenly his eye lighted. Could that be she? his "*little Sydney*?" that tall graceful girl, with the braids of jetty hair crowning a head held with such royal pride, the black lashes sweeping the olive cheek, and the small mouth curved with a queenly disdain of the flattery the French courtier who stood by her side was pouring into her listless ear? "Robe of satin and Brussels lace" falling from the shapely shoulders and trailing in graceful folds upon the floor, and diamonds

glittering upon neck and arms! Surely this could not be the Sydney of old! But while he looked he knew it was she, for the haughty face changed. Sight and color leaped into eyes, cheeks, and lips. He watched in the direction her eyes were turned, and saw a figure approaching that explained her emotion to him, and made him clench his own teeth vindictively, for he *recognized his man!*

Leon Juarez came through the crowd in his lordly, graceful way, with his eyes fixed upon the face that flushed and paled by turns under the serpent power of those glowing eyes. And as Bruce watched, he knew that it was not love that Sydney Archer felt for Leon Juarez. He knew the man's wonderful magnetism of manner, and the strangely impressive nature of the girl, and he knew that once convinced of his unworthiness, the spell he had woven about her would be broken. A thrill of joy shot through his heart as he felt that he had the power to save the girl so dear to him, and breaking through decorum and etiquette, he sprang through the crowd until he stood by her side, between Leon and his victim.

"Sydney!" he said, in a voice that only reached her ear.

When the glance of the dark eyes was turned from Juarez's to his, it changed to an eager imploring look, and as forgetful as he of the rigid rules of French society, she held out both hands with a cry of joy. Unheeding alike the lowering brow of the baffled Juarez, or the surprised glance of Madame Vaulx and her guests, he drew her arm within his, and led her away to the alcove he had left. When shielded from view and he had given her a seat, he only said:

"Sydney! Little Sydney, have you no word of welcome for me?" And was not surprised by the burst of passionate tears that answered him.

He took no apparent heed of her emotion, but began telling her of home affairs—messages from his mother and Cleo, and from Genie who had come over with him, and was now waiting impatiently to see "Sydie," till gradually the sobbings ceased, and she lifted as bright and interested a face to his as if the four years of estrangement were blotted out, and she were "child Sydney" again. How long they talked there neither of them knew; but at last consciousness came back to Sydney with a shudder.

"I must go," she said, rising. "It seems

like leaving home again. O Dr. Marlin, if you had but come sooner?"

"I am here now, Sydney," he whispered, "to help you help yourself."

Juarez was awaiting them, and Bruce felt the little hand upon his arm tremble with excitement as he approached. But when he caught the steely gleam of Bruce's blue eye fixed upon him, he muttered something indistinctly, and retreated. Bruce said nothing, but led the way to where Sydney's uncle was standing. Her lip quivered as she saw the tender look of love he bent upon her, and she longed then and there to throw herself in his arms and sob out her repentance and sorrow. She saw no more of Juarez that night, for her guardians were too zealous in their care, and she was too happy to be angry or proud.

The next day, according to promise, Bruce called upon Sydney and her uncle, and with him came Genie, now a handsome boy of nearly ten years, and almost wild with delight at seeing "his own Sydnie," as he invariably called her. To Sydney there was a sense of rest and peace in the very clasp of the childish arms about her neck, and the pure loving kisses on her lip. But by-and-by her uncle took Genie away, and left the other two together.

"Sydney," said Bruce, "I want to talk to you, dear, just as I used to talk when you were fifteen and I your only guardian. May I?"

In her strangely humbled mood, she could only look into the blue eyes, and answer "Yes."

He told her the story of his meeting with Juarez in Spain, ten years before. I cannot tell it to you, but the substance was that it happened in a little inland town where Juarez had wooed and won a beautiful peasant girl, whom he would then have deserted had not her brother, a fiery young Spaniard, placed his dagger at his breast, and given him his choice—to die, or wed the girl he had so cruelly wronged. Cowardly in all things, he had married her, then left her; and "Sydney, she is living yet!"

When he had finished he sprang to her side, so deathlike had grown her face, but, "I shall not faint," she said, proudly, rising, drawing her slender form to its full height. "And I do not ask you to prove what you have told me, for your word is sufficient. I thank you." And she left the room.

When she reached her room it was not to

weep over blighted hopes and love, but to sink upon her knees, for the first time in years, in an outburst of thanks to the God she had so long forgotten, but who had saved his willful, erring child from a fate worse than death. The glamour was gone, the scales had fallen from her eyes, and she knew that she had never loved Leon, and shuddered at her own infatuation. As she prayed, the old love and truthfulness came back to her heart, and the tears that rained down her cheeks washed away all the doubt and skepticism which had made her miserable, and she felt the rapture that only the soul can feel that is reconciled to God.

As she arose from her knees there was an unusual bustle in the hall below, and her uncle met her at the door of her room. His face was very pale, but there was an exultant look in his eye. He kissed his niece tenderly, and said, "Bruce wants you, darling," leading the way to his own room. Wonderingly she followed him.

Bruce sat in a large armchair before the grate, very pale, and with blood upon his clothes, and in the further corner stood Juarez, in custody of an officer of the French police! With an exclamation of alarm, Sydney knelt at Bruce's side, but he smiled reassuringly and looked at her uncle.

"Leon Juarez," said the latter, deliberately, "are you willing to state to Miss Archer that what Dr. Marlin told her of your career was undoubtedly true?"

The questioned man laughed a low sardonic laugh that grated upon Sydney's ear for months afterwards, and said:

"Certainly! but then she needs no proof. His word was sufficient—"

"There! Take him away, officer!" said Blake, impatiently. And with a mocking smile on his lip he was gone, and that was the last Sydney ever saw of her lover, Don Leon Juarez.

Bruce answered her inquiring look.

"I had reached my lodgings after leaving you, Sydney, and was ascending the stairs, when Juarez sprang upon me and plunged his dagger in my arm. Fortunately, I am a much stronger man than he, and was enabled to hold him until Genie, who had heard the scuffle, summoned an officer. Do not turn so pale, little girl! It is only a flesh wound, and I would willingly have given my life to have saved you from the fate that I knew was impending."

"And do not cry so, darling," said her un-

cle, taking her in his arms. "All will be forgiven and forgotten, and we will go back to our native mountains to find happiness again. I shall never forgive myself for the share I had in all this misery, and, God helping me, I mean to live a nobler, better life hereafter."

CHAPTER IX.

THEY did go back to the grand old mountains, stopping a while to take with them from Nashville, Colonel and Mrs. Marlin, Clara and Cleo, and their respective husbands. A joyous summer it was to all of them, especially to Sydney, whose step grew as light and her laugh as merry, here in the mountain solitudes where nature never ceases to chant the praises of God with her myriad voices, as Genie's own. She did not forget the past, and had no desire to forget it, for it had taught her a lesson she could have learned in no other way, and eradicated from her nature the faults that might have wrecked her whole life.

Then her first book of poems was given to the world, and won for her a name and fame among men, causing her uncle's heart to glow with pride. Her stepmother had been dead a year, and of course the farm was now Sydney's, whose first step was to establish upon it a school for the mountain children, and place it in charge of an excellent teacher from the North; a work that had been her day dream for years. One day she left the rest of the party, and wandered alone up the steep mountain side, recalling, as she did so, the day she had bounded over the stones regardless of all bodily pain. When she reached the lonely lookout rock, where a part of the pine tree still remained, charred and black, she sank upon her knees and prayed, thanking God for the watchful guidance and care that had brought her, since that day, out of the dark and devious ways where her feet had willfully strayed, into the broad clear light of his love again. Even while she prayed she became conscious that she was not alone, and looking up she saw Bruce standing just as he had stood upon that memorable night.

"Do not rise, Sydney," he said. "I want to kneel by your side and thank God for the double blessing he gave me on this spot." When they arose he took both her hands and said, "Sydney, darling, before we leave this place, now hallowed to both of us, I

want to tell you what I had thought I never should. I love you, Sydney, with a love that is dearer than the love of a friend, and have, I believe, for years. I just want you to know this, dear. I do not dare to hope that you give me any other love than that of a friend, and I cannot ask you to link your young life, that ought to be and will be hereafter so full of mirth and joy, to my older, graver one."

He was silent until he looked into Sydney's face. The red lips were speechless, but the great dark eyes were eloquent with a love that was too deep for words, and her breath came and went in the old fitful fashion he remembered so well whenever she was deeply moved. In spite of his doubt and fear, he could not but read his answer by these signs, and gathered the dear form in his arms close to the lonely heart where her image had been enshrined longer than he knew himself. They sat there almost till the twilight shadows fell, and talked over their whole lives, not shrinking from the gloomy spots in each, but rejoicing that they could come no more. While they talked, Genie sprang up the path and stood before them.

"So you have found your way up here, have you, my boy?" said his father, making room for him between them.

"O, I come up here nearly every day and think what a jolly old night of it Sydnie and I had up here once!"

"Why, you don't remember it, Genie?"

"You bet I do!" he said, so earnestly, that they were compelled to believe him and could not scold him.

"What would you say, Genie, if I were to tell you that 'Sydnie' has promised to be your mother instead of your sister?" with a mischievous look at the blushing girl.

The boy's merry laugh rang out through the shadow.

"Have you two just found *that* out? Why, Grandma, and Uncle Syd, and Aunt Cleo, and me have known it would be that way for a long time! And I say she'll be a jolly good little mother, wont you, Sydnie?"

At this original view of the case their own laughter mingled with his, and "Young America" went unreprieved. Then they wandered down the mountain side with the boy between them, even as they will wander down the hill of life. Sydney is happy as Bruce Marlin's wife; if she ever thinks of her Paris life, it is as of a fevered dream, from which she is glad to awaken to the blessed reality of her noble husband's love.

SYL'S TALENT.

BY ELIZABETH BIGELOW.

THE fields were turning brown, the pitiless wind was stripping the trees of their gay dresses, one melancholy robin piped plaintively from the tall elm tree at the foot of the garden. The whole world was putting on sackcloth and ashes, it seemed to Syl, as she stood at the garden gate bidding Stephen Lawrence good-by.

"It will only be for a little while," he said, looking tenderly down into the tear-brimmed eyes. "Before you begin to think of spring, I shall come back—come back to claim my wife! Syl, darling, be true to me, whatever they say, whatever happens!"

"I will," answered Syl.

"I will," she murmured, over and over again to herself, watching him until the turn in the road hid him from her sight, "whatever happens, whatever they say!"

"They" meant her mother and Aunt Jane; Aunt Jane, especially. The sitting-room door was ajar, and Syl heard her voice as she went into the house.

"You have been very imprudent to allow her to go with him so much, Susan," she said. "I never had any opinion of these city young men, that come along as sure as the summer does, to turn all the girls' heads, and artists are always as poor as church mice, everybody knows. As for the notion he has got into Sylvia's head that she has a wonderful talent for drawing, it is all sheer nonsense, of course. She's got no money to pay to learn, and if she had, and could be a great artist, she couldn't make so much money as she'll have when she is Derrick Hurst's wife, without the trouble of earning it. For my part, I am very glad that dreadful smooth-spoken Mr. Stephen Lawrence is going away, and I hope Sylvia has got a little common sense left, and wont insist upon writing to him. We must get her safely married to Derrick Hurst before Christmas! But I am sure I don't know where her wedding outfit is to come from. O, that we should have come to such poverty!"

Syl didn't care to hear any more. She stole softly up stairs to her room, and shut the door to put out the sound of the voices down stairs that it made her almost frantic to hear. It was not that she cared so much for what Aunt Jane said, for she was always

sure to have something to worry and complain about; the slightest thing would do. Syl remembered wondering, when she was a very little girl, what Aunt Jane would do when she got to heaven, where there would be nothing to fret about. And that was before she had any real trouble. Now she wore widow's weeds, and there were traces of suffering in her face. Six years before her husband had gone to California to seek his fortune. He was successful even beyond his expectations, and in a year started for home with money enough, so he wrote, to make them all independent for life. But he never reached home. He was seen at Allston, a town only ten miles distant, on a stormy winter night, and he was never seen again. He seemed to drop out of existence completely, then, leaving not the shadow of a trace behind; while at home they waited and watched for him in vain. The road from Allston was long and lonely, to be sure, and he was a careless man, and might have boasted of the money he was carrying home, but robbers were very uncommon there, and nobody had seen any strangers about. His disappearance created a great excitement for a time, and then was forgotten, as such things are, except by his wife and sister—Syl's mother—who waited and watched, and caught their breath at the sound of every footstep, in the long dreary nights and days, and grew sick at heart as the suspense settled down into a certainty that he would never come; and yet, not quite a certainty, for even now a sudden knock at the door, or a letter in an unknown handwriting, would make their hearts thrill.

So, remembering Aunt Jane's trouble, Syl tried to be patient with her continual complaints and her interference with all her affairs. But she did think she might be allowed to marry without her consent. Aunt Jane had a horror of poverty, and so had Syl's mother, and poverty was knocking loudly at their door. Syl's father had died when she was a baby, leaving his wife and child little beside the farm they lived on; and, wanting shrewd brains to take care of it, that little had dwindled rapidly away. Of late, the harvest had proved a failure every year, the farm was mortgaged at first,

then passed entirely out of their hands, and Aunt Jane declared they should all go to the poorhouse unless Syl married Derrick Hurst. Her mother said less, but Syl knew that her heart was as firmly set upon her marrying Derrick Hurst, as Aunt Jane's was. Before Stephen Lawrence came, she had thought that she might some day do as they wished, if there were really no other way to keep them from starving, but now, not for worlds! not if they all had to beg their bread, she said to herself, every time she heard his name mentioned. She had never liked Derrick Hurst. She remembered him as a surly, ill-natured boy when they went to school together; she had always preferred any one of the other boys for a cavalier, and been annoyed and indignant when the girls teased her about him, for he always insisted upon drawing her on his sled, and brought her apples and candy, and made himself her devoted slave. He had never been a favorite in the village, until of late his evident prosperity and wealth had made him popular. When his father died, seven or eight years before, they had been poor, everybody said; the farm on which they lived, three miles out of the village, was all "running down," and the house going to decay; and for two or three years afterwards Derrick had seemed to have no ambition to make things better. But all at once there was a change. Derrick went away to the city, and stayed nearly a year, and made money in fortunate speculations, people said. At any rate, the farm soon began to hold its own with the best farms in the country; and it was no wonder, the old farmers said, considering the money that was spent on it. The house was repaired, too, but now that was not fine enough for Derrick. His new house in the village was almost done—a stately mansion, with a French roof, and bay windows, and all modern appurtenances, finer than anybody in Densboro' had ever dreamed of having.

And of this fair mansion Syl was invited to be mistress. A lucky girl, everybody said. There wasn't another girl in Densboro' who wouldn't jump at the chance, even if there were some who would consider Derrick an incumbrance. One couldn't expect to have such a position in life without some drawbacks. And Derrick was a fine fellow, with the dress and manners of a gentleman, and, if the Hursts had been a rather worthless drinking set, the Derricks, his ancestors on his mother's side, were the first people in

the country. Of course, Syl had only been flirting with that artist from the city to tease Derrick; she was always a bit of a coquette. She would never be such a fool as to refuse Derrick.

Syl had refused Mr. Derrick Hurst, but he did not seem able to realize, any more than the rest of the village people, that she could be in earnest in declining such a position in life as he offered her, or else, as his face indicated, he was not the one to take no for an answer, not the one to accept defeat while there was a shadow of a chance of victory. And he said to himself, now, that he had more than the shadow of a chance of victory, with Aunt Jane and Syl's mother on his side, and their farm in his hands.

Syl walked her chamber floor, that afternoon, and considered what she should do. "Get her married to Derrick Hurst before Christmas, indeed!" Aunt Jane would see! And they would not go to the poorhouse, either. For had not Stephen Lawrence declared that she had wonderful talent, and, with the instruction he had given her, might paint pictures that would sell, might become, in time, a famous artist? Already Syl fancied herself presenting the deed of the farm to her mother on her own wedding day—the day when she should be married to Stephen Lawrence, with scarcely a remonstrance even from Aunt Jane. For when she should be a millionaire, by her own labors, who would presume to dictate to her? And so Syl reared her stately castle, and its foundations, in the talent that she felt and knew she possessed, looked so solid, that she would have laughed at anybody who called it a castle in the air.

"It seems to me you were out a good while," said Aunt Jane, when she went down stairs. "Mr. Hurst was up here to see you. I guess he'll come again this evening. I suppose you know that the rent is due, and there's no way that I know of to pay it. It isn't very pleasant to be dependent on anybody that you treat as you do Derrick Hurst!"

"We are not going to be dependent on Derrick Hurst. I have a way to pay the rent, and I don't think he will have to wait for it more than a month, at the most."

Aunt Jane opened her eyes wide.

"O, you expect to earn the money by the exercise of your *talent*, I suppose!" she said, scornfully.

"Yes," said Syl, with provoking coolness.

"Well," said Aunt Jane, after a pause,

making a feat of wiping her eyes with her handkerchief, "if John had only lived, your mother and I shouldn't be obliged to depend upon a silly heartless chit of a girl like you, Talent, fiddlestick!" she cried, removing her handkerchief as her wrath began to rise again, "I'd rather have common sense enough to see which side my bread was buttered on, than all the talent in the world!"

Syl withdrew from the contest then, for, however long it might last, Aunt Jane was always sure to have the last word.

Derrick Hurst made his appearance that evening, with his black brows a little unbent from their usual frown; now that the coast was clear he was sure of winning.

But the reception Syl gave him was anything but promising. "We shall ask you to wait only a little while longer for your rent, Mr. Hurst," she said, with something of a grand air, and a tone that said, "of course, you could have come here only on business!"

"Rent! don't talk to me of rent!" he said, impatiently. "You know I am glad and happy to have you live here as long as—until you come to live in my new house, with me, Syl!"

The angry blood mounted to Syl's forehead, and her eyes flashed. "That will never be!" she said, and left him for her mother and Aunt Jane to entertain, while she went to her own room, and tried to forget her anger in the delights of carmine and cobalt.

While Mr. Derrick Hurst, taking his homeward way, said to himself, with an exclamation which he would not have cared to have Syl hear:

"It will be! it shall be! and soon, too!"

Syl's first picture was soon finished, for she put her whole soul into it, and worked night and day. She sent it to an art dealer in the nearest large city, and waited in anxious suspense to learn its fate, on which all her hopes depended. Stephen Lawrence had asked her to send it to him to sell, but she knew that if he were unable to sell it he would buy it himself to save her from disappointment, and let her think she had been successful. So she determined to win her way without help. It seemed an age to her before she heard from her picture. Then a brief discouraging letter came. Her picture was bold and somewhat original, but showed an unskilled hand. By years of study and practice she might win success, but now the market was crowded with pictures like hers, which could find no sale.

So Syl's castle crumbled, before her eyes, utterly into ruins, soon, for Stephen Lawrence's letters suddenly ceased. Syl was sure at first that he must be ill or dead, and kept on writing to him, in vain. Aunt Jane and her mother were loud in proclaiming that they had known, all the time, he was only flirting with Syl; he was poor, and, of course, was on the lookout for a rich wife; there were girls enough who could be fooled into marrying him, by his handsome face and his soft speeches.

It was long before Syl doubted him; she conjured up a thousand things, probable and improbable, that might have prevented his writing. She never quite lost faith in him. But what was she to do? Her "nither pressed her sair," as in the old song; disappointment and suspense had made her pale and ill, and the village people began now to shake their heads, and say that Syl Shepard was in love with that artist, after all, and was pining away on his account, and Syl was proud, and that was hard to bear; and, more than all, they were dependent on Derrick Hurst for shelter; by-and-by what would keep them from starving, now that her talent had failed her?

So it came to pass that Derrick Hurst went home one night triumphant, leaving his betrothal ring on Syl's finger. The new house was finished and ready for its mistress, and the wedding was arranged to take place in the last of January. Aunt Jane, and Syl's mother, and Derrick had arranged it, and Syl did not even hint at a delay. She feigned an interest in her wedding preparations, and tried her best to be cheerful, even gay, for Syl was not one to wear her heart upon her sleeve. She knew that she could never forget Stephen Lawrence, and that happy summer past, but she banished all thought of them, as much as possible, from her mind. But she could not give up her painting, though that recalled her teacher continually to her; it was her one consolation; the only way in which she could forget her sorrow, for a moment.

It was only three weeks before the wedding day. There was to be a ball at Allston, and, after repeated urging from Derrick, Syl had consented to go. She was the prettiest girl in Densboro', and Derrick liked to display his conquest. To Syl, now, such gayeties were torture, and she was glad enough to find it a stormy day when she awoke.

"La," said Aunt Jane, "the storm wont

hurt you! You may be sure that Derrick wont mind it, for he is determined to show you to the Allston folks."

And Derrick didn't mind, though the storm raged still more fiercely, as it drew towards night. Syl had been strangely nervous and excited all day. She felt a presentiment of something going to happen, whether good or ill she could not tell. And, though she laughed at her own folly, she could not rid herself of it. She was gay without an effort, and Aunt Jane and her mother agreed with Derrick Hurst that she had never looked so well in her life. She wore a white muslin dress, caught up with cherry ribbons over a cherry silk petticoat that had been Aunt Jane's, in the days of her youthful gayeties, and the ribbons were not so bright as her cheeks. Even the long dreary ride through the storm to Allston, with Derrick Hurst beside her, could not take away her spirits. When they passed the Hurst farm, which was out on the road to Allston, the great lonely old house made Syl shudder. There were pine trees around it, and they made such a lonesome moaning as the wind swept through them! She felt a thrill of thankfulness that that was not to be her home. Derrick's mother was to live there still, after he was married and gone to his new house. She was very old, and never went outside the door. There were stories about that she had lost her mind, or was insane; nobody knew exactly what was the matter, for nobody except Derrick and his aunt had seen her for years. The aunt, his father's sister, was to live with her still; she was a stern, hard-featured old woman, who never had lived and never would live in any house where she could not be mistress. Syl had only seen her once or twice—the Hursts had always lived in a solitary way, having very little to do with the village people—but from that slight acquaintance she had decided she could readily excuse her from living with her.

Syl was the gayest of the gay at the ball, but it was only because of a nervous restlessness that had nothing to do with happiness.

The storm had increased with every hour after nightfall, and when they set out on their return it raged fearfully; the rain and sleet drove into the carriage so that Syl was drenched, the darkness was intense, and the horse stopped entirely every now and then, unable to struggle against the furious wind.

"We may be able to get as far as my house," Derrick said. "You cannot possibly

get home to-night. Aunt Joanna will take care of you, and give you some dry clothing."

At any other time the thought of passing the night in that house, that had always looked so dreary and ghostly to her, would have been insupportable to Syl, but now in the storm and darkness the light that streamed from its window looked cheery and inviting. Still, if it had been possible, she would have preferred to go home, and she was sure Derrick would have preferred to have her, for he always seemed averse to having her enter his house.

But Aunt Joanna made an effort to relax her grim features into a smile, as she greeted her, and bustled about, with quite a show of hospitality, to get her some hot tea and dry clothing. But when she ushered her into the room where she was to sleep, Syl's heart almost failed her. It was a great desolate room on the ground floor, with a damp uninhabitable feeling, and looking as if nobody had entered it for years. The dust lay thick on the clumsy old-fashioned furniture, and the spiders had festooned their webs over the windows. Miss Joanna made some half-muttered apology for the uninviting aspect of the room; they so seldom had company that she had fallen into the habit of neglecting the rooms which they did not use. Even the wood fire, burning in the open fireplace, did not take away anything of the dreary, uncanny look of the apartment. The shadows of the firelight took ghostly shapes on the walls; outside the wind moaned and wailed through the pines like a human voice.

Sleep would not come at Syl's bidding. She lay and listened to the wind, and watched the wavering shadows on the wall that now were ghastly distorted faces, and now ghostly beckoning hands, while the night wore slowly away. How could it be so long, she wondered, ten was almost gone when she left the ballroom in the Allston Hotel? Suddenly she heard slow soft footfalls in the hall, then the door of her room swung noiselessly open. Syl was not sure whether she was awake or dreaming when she saw the figure that entered—a little old woman, with a yellow wrinkled face, and white hair falling around it. As she came before the fire, so that its light fell on her face, Syl recognized her. It was Derrick's mother. She had seen her often in childhood, but she had changed fearfully since then. If she had seen her anywhere else she would not have known her, Syl said to herself.

She went up to the bed and looked keenly, yet with a sort of terror in her face, at Syl. The blood grew cold in Syl's veins, she had no strength to move or cry out.

"It isn't him nor his ghost," the old woman murmured. "You needn't be afraid; they wouldn't kill a young girl like you. But there has been blood spilled in this house—in this very room!" Her voice sank to a tragic whisper on the last words, and then she moaned and wrung her hands, and paced up and down the room.

Syl felt as if some horrible nightmare were upon her. And yet she knew it was reality; she was alone with this mad woman, and with no power to call for help.

She came back to the bed soon, and bent her lips to Syl's ear.

"There's blood on those walls beside the bed! They had it papered over, but paper won't stay on it; you can see how it has started off. I pulled up one corner the other day, and I saw the blood! Joanna doesn't know that I come here; she would kill me if she did; she doesn't like to come herself, and she isn't afraid of anything earthly. But this room is full of ghosts! they are walking around here, and crying and groaning all night. I thought you were one of them, at first. He is here—John Lyford, with that great gash in his throat, and the blood streaming out—rivers and rivers of blood! Isn't it strange that he can come back, when he is buried so deep? way down at the bottom of the old well; you know where the old well is, out by the pine grove. They carried him out there—Derrick and Joanna. It was hard, when he was only three miles from home, wasn't it? But the old well is deep, and nobody will ever know it! And Derrick is a rich man, now, you know, and nobody will ever know where John Lyford is. Derrick has built a new house; he don't like to live here, because John Lyford's ghost comes here, and he is going to marry John Lyford's niece—little Syl Shepard. She don't see the blood on his hands; nobody can see it but me, Joanna says; but there it is, dripping, dripping all the time!"

She moaned and wrung her hands frantically, and then talked incoherently and excitedly. Syl, straining her ears to the utmost, could not catch an intelligible word. All her terror had vanished in the excitement of the fearful discovery she had made. Was it truth, or only the fancies of this disordered brain?

The gray light of dawn was just beginning

to stream into the window, and the old woman took her departure, first coming to the bedside again, and looking, with that same terrified expression, at Syl, as if not yet sure that she was not a ghost.

Syl was not bewildered nor frightened, now. She was filled with amazement and horror, but her brain had never been clearer. How plainly the story had been told! And there was not a shadow of doubt of its truth in her mind. A hundred trifles that she had scarcely noticed before, crowded up in her memory to confirm the story. Derrick's nervousness at unexpected sounds and footsteps, the sudden pallor that had come over his face when, two or three times, she had spoken of the pine grove. And then this sudden wealth that had come to him—by speculation, he said. Poor Uncle John! coming home with his heart so full of joyful anticipations. And how near she had come to being a murderer's wife! Now the task of bringing the murderer to justice devolved upon her, and how terrible the task! How little proof she had! Would anybody believe that what she had heard was anything more than the raving of an insane woman?

The wall paper had started off in one place, and Syl moved the bed away from it, taking care to make no noise, and then pulled it up; there was a faint dark stain on the plastered wall. She tore the paper off the whole length of the roll, and under it, spattered over the wall, almost to the ceiling, were stains of blood. Some one had evidently tried to wash them out, and finding that vain had papered over them. A faintness and trembling seized Syl when she saw them, and a sudden terror. To get away from that house, never to see Derrick nor his aunt again, was all she cared for. She dressed herself hastily, determining to get away before they were awake. When he saw the torn paper would not Derrick know why she had gone? A sudden thought struck her. She would show him that she knew, and then, if it were true, he would never come near her again.

Afterwards Syl thought that her brain must have been turned by that dreadful night's experience, or she should never have done so wild a thing, never have had courage enough to do it, after what she had heard and saw. But then she did not stop to think after the idea came to her.

She took a piece of charcoal from the smouldering fire, and drew on the plastering from which she had torn the paper, beside

those dark-red stains, a sketch—the edge of the pine grove, and the old well. She could see them, in the dim light of the early morning, from the window, and she drew them, even with her rough materials, with almost startling accuracy. The work had a strange fascination for her; she put her whole soul into it, exulting in her ability as she had never done before. Was not her talent of some use to her, in spite of Aunt Jane's sneers? Amidst the heap of stones around the well she drew a skull, grinning and ghastly. Before she had put the finishing touches to her picture she heard footsteps overhead. She stole out, unbarred the great front door softly, and ran swiftly, breathlessly, without a backward glance, towards home.

The sun was shining brightly; there was no trace of the storm save in the drenched fields and muddy roads. Syl had put on her ball attire of the night before, and it was soon wet and dragged, but she flew on, never heeding it, fancying continually, in her terror, that she heard footsteps following her, Derrick Hurst's voice calling her.

A mile away from home her path crossed the railroad track; it ran over a steep ascent that was hard to climb, and Syl was forced to pause to take breath. It was well that she did so, for just then a puff of smoke through the trees told her that a train of cars was coming around the curve—the morning train that was due at Densboro' at seven o'clock. Her eyes wandered carelessly along the track as she waited, till suddenly they fell upon something that made her spring forward with a cry of alarm. Only a few rods from where she stood the track had been torn up, for two or three yards, and thrown down over the embankment! Her frantic cries were unheard; the train came rushing along at lightning speed. Syl shut her eyes. There came a terrible crash, and then cries of terror and pain rang in her ears. All around her crushed and mangled forms were lying; one had fallen almost at her feet. She sank down beside it, with a cry that rang above all the others, when her eyes fell on the upturned face. For it was Stephen Lawrence's face!

"You here, Syl? you come down to meet me?" he murmured, with a gleam of gladness in his eyes. "My darling! I was sure you must be ill or dead, from your long silence! I would not believe you were false to me. I could not endure the suspense any longer, and so I came down. Why didn't you write?"

"I haven't heard from you for months,

Stephen; only two or three times since you went away! I thought it was you who was false," said Syl. And then there was no more time for explanations, and Stephen had no more strength to speak. Help had come from the village, and they were caring for the sufferers, as speedily as possible. But it seemed ages to Syl before Stephen was safely at her own home.

He was badly hurt, but he would live, was the doctor's verdict, and Syl's joy and thankfulness knew no bounds when she thought, shudderingly, of what might have been, of four or five houses in Densboro' that had been made desolate by the railroad accident. But, except by the sufferers, that was soon almost forgotten in a new sensation.

Derrick Hurst and his Aunt Joanna had disappeared, leaving not the slightest clue to their whereabouts, and old Mrs. Hurst had wandered into the village, telling to everybody she met the story she had told to Syl. At first people treated the story as insane folly, but the disappearance of Derrick and his aunt put a new face upon the matter. The house was examined, and the stains and that strange picture found upon the wall, and then Syl told of her night's stay there, and it became evident that the picture had driven Derrick Hurst away. When the well was searched and a skeleton found in it, there was no more doubt. Large rewards were offered for his apprehension, but all in vain, and at last his property was all made over to Aunt Jane, to whom there was no doubt that it rightfully belonged.

Years afterward a story found its way to Densboro' that Derrick Hurst had died in California, and, dying, had confessed his crime, and also that he had caused the railroad accident, learning that Stephen Lawrence was on the train, through his letters to Syl, which he had intercepted.

But the news mattered little to anybody, now, except that perhaps Syl Lawrence may have felt a little relief at knowing he was no longer in the world. Her husband is growing famous as an artist, but since that night Syl can never bear to touch a pencil, and Aunt Jane persists in saying that "the only good Syl's talent ever did was to help a murderer to get rid of his just deserts;" but Syl answers that but for that she might never have come into possession of the wealth she so values and enjoys, for Derrick Hurst's guilt might never have been proven if she had not frightened him away.

TAKING SUMMER BOARDERS.

BY MRS. R. B. EDSON.

"ANNIE," said Mrs. Atherton, calling from the dark cool pantry at the end of the long kitchen.

There was no answer. The languid June air rustled faintly in the leaves of the tall poplars by the gate, and over the clover-bordered path the rose-leaves fluttered and fell in little fragrant drifts. The jubilant song of a robin floated up from the orchard through the open windows, and flooded the old kitchen with sudden melody.

"Annie!"

"Yes, mother," answered a dreamy, reluctant voice; and a slight figure lifted itself from the low oaken threshold, casting one or two lingering glances backward at the long reach of meadow-land, the cool shadowy orchard, with its great tentlike trees spreading to the dewy sward, and the long line of locusts that bordered the path, their drooping milk-white plumes heavy with perfume.

"I do wish, Annie, you had a little more force," said Mrs. Atherton, looking up from the long lines of milk-pans she was arranging on the shelves. "I wish you had some of my ambition. Now, what is there to hinder our taking summer boarders, and making money, as well as other folks, I should like to know?"

"Boarders!—we?" And a look of blank surprise came over the pretty thoughtful face of Annie Atherton.

Mrs. Atherton waited a full minute before replying. The truth was she had been carefully preparing this small thunderbolt to launch at the unsuspecting head of poor Annie for weeks, and she could not resist the sportsman-like desire to pause and exult just a little over the excellence and success of her aim.

The young face in the doorway flushed just a little with vexation, and then turned abruptly away.

"Stop, Annie; I want to talk with you," resumed the elder lady, coolly lifting the thick cream from the milk that had begun to turn. "You see Carmel is getting to be quite a resort for city folks, who consider it genteel to shut up their houses and go ranging about the country, astonishing the na-

tives, and abusing them afterwards. "Well, I don't care for that. It will be purely a business transaction, so far as we are concerned, and that is all we need remember. You know there is a two hundred dollar mortgage on the farm—"

"But, mother," interrupted Annie, eagerly, "I am to have the school next term; Miss Perham is to be married. I didn't tell you about it for fear you would oppose my taking it. Mr. Travers has the power to engage teachers, and I went down there three weeks ago, and he promised it to me without the least hesitation. He was so kind—I wasn't a bit afraid of him after he spoke, though I *did* dread going into such an august presence," she added, laughing.

"Well, I'm glad you found him so agreeable, for you will have the pleasure of calling on him again," Mrs. Atherton replied, quietly.

"Mother—"

"It is no use, Annie," in a tone of decision; "you are not going to teach school, and that is the end of it; so you can call on John Travers as soon as you please. I would sell off the stock—the farm itself—before you should do it. But I don't intend to do either. Edgerly's folks cleared three hundred dollars on their boarders last summer; why cannot I make two?"

"But they had ten—"

"And I propose to take ten," she interrupted. "Mrs. Edgerly's father is failing, and he wants them to go out there—it's somewhere in Pennsylvania—and take care of him. He is worth twenty thousand dollars, and so, of course, they'll go. She had promised to take the same party she had last year, and they were to come the twenty-second of this month; but she wrote them she could not have them. I happened in just as she was sealing her letter, and proposed taking them in her stead, if they did not object to the change, which they did not."

"O mother, and they will be here next week!" Annie exclaimed, bursting into tears. "No more quiet, no more privacy, all the pleasantness and sacredness of home destroyed, all our furniture—every little treasure, every old heirloom so dear to us for the

tender associations of the past—to be submitted to vandal touch and speech, ridiculed as city people invariably ridicule everything they find in 'the country.' O mother! I had rather die than have this dear old home invaded so cruelly!" And the slender figure shivered and shrank away in a perfect agony of sensitive pain and dread.

Mrs. Atherton did not seem greatly surprised or moved by her daughter's passionate appeal. The truth was, it was precisely what she had expected. It was for this reason she had made no mention of her plans to Annie until they were all completed and the time close at hand. Probably, if she had seen any other way of lifting the debt as easily and readily, she would not have adopted this method. But a small farm in New England is not exactly an Aladdin's lamp, even with a man's careful and steady toil; but when the strong arms are nerveless and the faithful heart still, when a woman's untrained hand must hold the helm, when uninterested labor gets less from the land, and wages swallow up what little there may be of profit, then it requires a shrewdness and nicety of calculation which would be no discredit to the professional financier.

When William Atherton died there was a mortgage of three hundred and fifty dollars on the farm. The mortgage and farm had both come to him by marriage, it being the birthplace of his wife, and of her father before her. Originally the mortgage had been seven hundred dollars; when it came into William Atherton's possession, some five years before his death, it was six hundred. Fifty dollars a year, above the interest, was all it was possible for him to lay aside, for those five years were freighted with misfortunes and griefs. But frosts, droughts and accidents were all swallowed up in the sorrowful calamity which came upon them in the loss of their only son. I do not mean that he died—at least, not then. We know our dead are safe—God keeps them; but alas for the dear ones lost in the swirling sea of sin and shame! they are the really lost.

With all our infidelities, and rebellions, and murmurings, underlying all our distrusts, and doubts, and fears, an intuitive and natural faith in the wisdom and beneficence of God springs eternal in the human breast. Somehow we *know*—even the most ungodly of us—that if he has done it, it is best. Terrible things, accidents, appalling and unexplainable; crimes falling with crushing effect

upon scores of innocent and blameless ones; these all, as we say, "happen." We are shocked, wounded, crushed; and yet, dimly through our pained consciousness, rises a vague sort of assurance that it is best, because He did it! I dare not wonder how men have so little faith; I can only marvel that they have so much. I do not mean by this, religious faith, but the instinctive natural faith of humanity.

So when Ross Atherton fell into temptation and sin, fleeing from home at the last to escape the penalty consequent upon his crimes, William Atherton and his wife lost for a while all heart and hope. What if the pleasant meadows and breezy uplands were freed from debt? he could not inherit them; his shame and sin stood like a wall between him and them. I do not know, but I think it was a positive relief when one day they heard that he was dead. "He was in His hands now," they said solemnly, but almost joyfully. And when, a few months later, the husband and father paused and looked back from the silent river whose chill waters even then laved his feet, he said, softly:

"There will be two of us on earth and two in heaven; and though I am sorry for you, I am glad for my boy—my poor tempted boy!"

Four years of care and anxiety had gone by, and two hundred dollars of the mortgage still remained unpaid. Mrs. Atherton had come to the determination to rid herself of this "old man of the sea," in some way within a year. But upon one point she was immovable; Annie should not keep school. She had the most unqualified contempt for reduced young ladies, who, from an idea that it was a genteel sort of work, sought situations as schoolteachers and governesses; though the latter class are seldom met with outside of romances, as she might have known, if she had stopped to reckon up the number of that imaginary and much-abused class, who had actually a "local habitation and a name." "If Annie *must* go from home to any kind of labor, then it should be good honest work, and not the hackneyed resort of every broken-down family since the flood!" she said, decidedly.

Annie knew her mother's prejudice, but the mortgage, which had been a sort of waking nightmare, haunting the otherwise peaceful paradise of her home, impelled her to the step she had taken, and which she knew would meet with opposition; but she argued

that if the engagement were made, her mother would permit her to keep it.

Down through the cool orchard closes, heedless of the damps beneath or the soft sunlight above, her ears deaf to all the sweet summer rhythms that filled the air, with tearful eyes and pained lips, Annie wandered in a sort of dreary half-consciousness. She heard the thrushes calling from the upland copse, and saw, as in a dream, an oriole flash in and out the leafy shadows of the poplars by the garden wall. But all the chords of her being were jangled and out of tune, and Nature, with her rarest touch, could not bring them into harmony all at once.

"Good-morning, Miss Atherton." The firm, pleasant, rather grave voice broke in upon her distracted fancies, and with a little cry she faced suddenly round, and saw Mr. Travers—quiet, gentlemanly, suave—standing close beside her. The first feeling was one of embarrassment and humiliation, the next of relief and a sort of vague rest. Without appearing to, he had been watching her face, and had read the different emotions expressed in it, the more readily because he had the key already in his possession.

"Miss Annie," he said, pleasantly, determined to help her out of her embarrassment as quickly as possible, "I have seen your mother—I called to see you on a little matter of business connected with the school—and she informed me that, unknown to you, she had made arrangements which will prevent your accepting the office I should have been most happy to have had you fill. Of course, you are excused, so do not let that make you unhappy."

"It is not that, Mr. Travers, though that did trouble me not a little; but it is the thought of all those strange people in my home—I remember them—O, I had rather die than have them there!" she cried, with a sudden nervous energy, and then remembering whom she was talking to, paused in sudden and blushing confusion.

"My dear child," he said, gently, taking the little fluttering hand in his cool firm clasp, "you are distressing yourself unnecessarily, I am sure. Come, let us look at it philosophically; are you ready?" smiling so encouragingly that for the life of her she could not help smiling faintly back. "Now, then," he resumed, in a quiet convincing tone that made her feel instantly calmed and subdued, "you see there is a great multitude of people, dwellers in cities mostly, afflicted

with the spirit of unrest. There are various causes leading to this state of things, which we will not stop to investigate, merely promising that it is largely epidemic in its character. In order to relieve this large class and make them as comfortable as possible, we, the sane and healthy portion of the body politic, have certain responsibilities and duties which, like all responsibilities and duties, are just a little onerous, perhaps. Now here is fashion, habit, possibly ill health, forcing a small detachment of these abnormal people upon your comfort and privacy. I don't blame you for shrinking a little from the infliction; but somebody has got to have them, and it is really for such a little time—ten weeks will seem like a dream to you when you are as old as I am, little girl."

"I don't care nearly as much as I did," she said, brightening. "O dear! how very silly and childish I must look to you, Mr. Travers; you who are always so wise and thoughtful about everything. I hope you will try to forget this morning. I—I so wished to appear well to you, you have been so kind to us in—in the past;" a vivid red staining the pretty downcast face.

The firm clasp tightened itself upon the small fluttering fingers, and there was the faintest bit of tremulousness or huskiness in the usually cool steady voice.

"I wish you would forget that as utterly as I do, Annie," he said, quickly. "I am satisfied with you as you are, so do not regret anything in your appearance. I cannot, however, because I do not wish to—and could not, if I did—forget this morning. Now let us go up to the house. I believe I have a horse somewhere on the premises. By the way, I know one of your boarders that is to be—Mr. Frederick Emerson. I met him in New York, and afterwards at the mountains last summer."

"Then he was not at Mr. Edgerly's? I thought it was the same party!" she said, in a tone of surprise.

"It is the same, with this exception. Mr. Emerson is called very fascinating, I believe, by the ladies," he replied, smilingly.

"It will make no difference to me; I am of quite another order of beings from the ladies with whom Mr. Emerson associates," she answered, with a sudden cool reserve in her face and speech.

"A higher order," he asked, gayly, "and therefore above the allurements, and vanities, and fascinations which are supposed to affect

them? Come, Miss Atherton, you are morbid on this subject," he added, seeing the quick color flush the sensitive face.

"Perhaps; but if I am, it is the result of observation. The people who come to Carmel certainly try to impress it upon our minds that they are an infinitely superior class of intelligences," smiling faintly. "The very word 'country' is a synonyme of ignorance and vulgarity; and even purity and virtue are slurred as being 'country prudishness.' The bare fact of one's not being familiar with city life stamps them at once as rude and 'green,' to use their favorite expression; but their own ignorance of some of the simplest workings of nature—its laws and courses, their ridiculous ideas about common things—why, these are all evidences of 'culture' and 'refinement,' of course! And these people are to be here, in my home, and I forced to hear their senseless ridicule of things they do not understand!"

"I am sorry you feel so about it," he replied gravely. "I suppose it is too late to alter the arrangements? I wish I had known it before."

Like a flash it came to her the construction he might put upon her complaints and confidence. If he had "known it before," what could he have done save pay the mortgage, thus preventing the necessity of their taking these boarders? For, despite his plea of "philosophy," she knew that he was quite as well aware as herself why they were to take them. Then it all came back to her how nobly he had befriended them when Ross brought disgrace and sorrow upon them, paying the charges brought against him from his own purse, without solicitation, and for a while without their knowledge; for Ross's crime had been taking money from the drawer of his employer, and he had fled upon the first intimation that he was suspected. The trouble had completely prostrated her father, and for weeks he was unable to leave his bed. When he at length was able to get out to see Mr. Guernsey, Ross's employer, he was informed that Mr. Travers had made good all deficiencies, and had requested them, as a personal favor, to recall the officer despatched to arrest him, which they had done. Afterwards her father had paid it back, every penny; he could not rest till he did, but the kindness and obligation remained, a forever uncancelled debt.

"It could have made no possible difference, Mr. Travers, if you had known it," she said,

coldly, though not meaning to be cold, but adopting this course in very self-defence. "The greatest favor you can do me is to never allude to the matter again, and to try to forget, as far as possible, all that I have said upon the subject. Good-morning." And, turning abruptly into a side path, she went up to the house, leaving him very much perplexed, and just a trifle, perhaps, vexed at the sudden change in her manner.

"She didn't think I was going to propose, did she," he said, half laughing, "and took this method to check my presumption? Poor little girl! she is as sensitive as the day-lilies that blossom under her windows. How well I remember the day she was born. I was, let me see—I was eighteen. I am getting old, certainly, as my friends kindly tell me, speculating, doubtless, at the same time, concerning the contents of my will—ah well!" And with a faint sigh and a fainter laugh, he vaulted into the saddle and rode slowly away.

John Travers was the rich man of Carmel. The Traverses were an old family in Carmel, but never a prolific one, and now it threatened to become wholly extinct. John, the only remaining one, being thirty-eight and a bachelor. Mr. Travers was not a susceptible man, which made the case more hopeless still. Ten or fifteen years ago and a score of Carmel belles were rivals for his favor and fortune. Now their children called him "old Travers," in innocent unconsciousness how near he had been to becoming their papa. Occasionally a widow, relying on her "gift of experience," looked again languishingly on the desired of her youth, but the ungallant recipient failed most signally to apprehend and appreciate the favor. He treated all women courteously, gently and—this was the trouble—impartially. He mingled in society rather moderately, yet enough to keep himself familiar with it; read extensively, and thought deeply. This was John Travers at the time I have introduced him to you. A suave, yet rather grave man, quiet and thoughtful in manner, with an under-current of deep tenderness in his nature not more than half suspected even by himself.

The dreaded twenty-second of June had been past nearly two weeks, and Annie Atherton, despite the invasion of the ten vandals—and they did invade every part of the roomy old house, and did ridicule, in a quiet way, a good many of the old-fashioned things it contained—yet, I must affirm, despite it all,

she was a very cheerful and happy-looking martyr. Once or twice she found herself contrasting this summer with the last—or indeed with any she could remember—with a vague sense of content and satisfaction which was altogether inexplicable to her. She found herself wishing for beautiful clothing and elegant jewels, and more than all for the ease and grace which seemed to be a part of the nature of the Misses Coblentz, and more especially for the elegance of look, movement and speech which particularly characterized Miss Ida Converse. She felt an overwhelming sense of awkwardness, which was sometimes so painful that she could not endure it, and ran away to her room to hide herself in mortification and tears. And yet, notwithstanding these disturbing elements, she was vaguely conscious of being as vaguely happy.

And so the summer counted off its golden jewels, and the dreamy haze of midsummer reflected itself in the soft eyes of Annie Atherton. Miss Converse, who made from the first a show of fondness for "Mignon," as she always called Annie, declared that she "grew beautiful every morning and dutiful every evening," referring by the last allusion to the light step and deft fingers which day by day grew more willing and ready in the many household tasks from which she had at first visibly shrunk.

"If I were a single man," said Mr. Coblentz, with a side glance at Emerson, "I should take some credit to myself as being a possible inspiration. But a man with a wife and two grown-up daughters is the simplest of ciphers in a young lady's arithmetic."

"Mr. Emerson is not as vain as you, papa," laughed Nell Coblentz. "I expect he is more used to conquests, and so his head is not so easily turned."

"I should be perfectly insane with delight if I could make an impression upon *your* heart, Miss Nell," Emerson retorted, coloring faintly.

"Should you?" she asked with ridiculous eagerness. "Well, I'll manage to let you know, if you do! I'll blush whenever you look at me, and look up at you shyly—so." And the coquettish lids fluttered, and then drooped shyly, in the most perfect imitation of the little fluttering glances of Annie Atherton.

They all laughed at this little bit of acting—Nell had a natural aptness for burlesque—and Miss Converse cried "encore." Mrs.

Atherton came into the room just then, and the subject dropped for that time.

But gradually it grew to be a standing amusement for the party to jest about "Emerson's conquest;" and Coblentz jocularly dubbed him "The Inspiration."

"There's one thing about you that I admire, Mr. Emerson," said Nell, "and that is your sweet reconciliation."

"I am glad you find something in me worthy of your admiration, Miss Coblentz," he interrupted.

"I presume so. But what I started to remark was, the fact that this susceptible little rustic, who, if the truth must be told, is prettier than any of us—which is saying a good deal"—glancing at Miss Converse; "the fact, I say, that she is deeply, deadly, desperately in love with your graces of mind and person, doesn't seem to afflict you above what you are able to bear. Your calm submission proves you a martyr of the first water; and if you ever want your epitaph written, I will do it with pleasure."

"Nellie!" Mr. Coblentz said, in a tone of remonstrance, noticing the sudden flush that crept into Emerson's face.

"O, let her go on. I like to furnish so dear a friend as Miss Nellie with pleasure; it is all in my character as martyr," Emerson interrupted.

"O, well, if you like it, then I shall do so no more. I am not going to be the stake for you to be tied to."

"But you are as merciless as the fagots," he said, in a low tone, as he passed her; to which she, for a wonder, did not reply, but a moment after went up to her room, where she staid persistently all the long quiet morning, declaring that she was "on the verge of idiocy with a headache," but coming down to dinner looking brighter, and with a wilder flow of spirits than usual, almost shocking her quiet, dignified mother, and her graceful, ladylike little sister Lena.

That afternoon Mr. Travers came down and invited the whole party to a picnic in a charming little grove on his own grounds. The invitation included Mrs. Atherton and Annie, of course. Mrs. Atherton declined, on the plea of "helping the girl," but really because she saw that her going would dampen the pleasure of the occasion for a portion of the party.

The truth was, Mrs. Atherton was secretly disgusted with taking summer boarders. The little assumptions of superiority, the

covert sneers at "country styles" and "rustic etiquette," the air of reserve—that impalpable wall, so real though so invisible—the spirit of condescension with which they seemed to regard her, all these, and a score of other little nameless trifles—for all these are trifles, looking at life in its deep realities, stripped of its artificial tinsel of caste and fashion. But to the quick mother eye and heart there was another reason, outweighing all the others a hundred fold, that made her impatient for the departure of her boarders. And so Mr. Travers was not the only one who saw the quick, eager, questioning glance which sought Frederick Emerson's face when he invited "Miss Annie," as he said, "as a special favor to himself."

Mrs. Atherton saw—and strangely enough, her face seemed almost the reflection of Travers's, both grave, both sad, both tender and yearning—yet neither saw the other, but Nell Coblenz saw them both, and smiled curiously with a little covert glance at Ida Converse. But Miss Converse was talking to Mr. Maitland, who had that morning come down from the city to see how his wife and two-year old baby were getting along, and to stay himself a week.

"The silly little fly!" Nell whispered, glancing back at Miss Gordon; her "maiden aunt of an uncertain age," as she generally designated her. "I've half a mind to be a good Samaritan once in my life, and break the pretty web; would you?"

"No; it's all the amusement we have here in the country," was the laughing reply. "Besides, if Miss Converse doesn't care, why should you?"

"O, she does, or I'd have interfered long ago! Mr. Travers," she cried, raising her voice and leaning forward, "have you any mad bulls, or snakes, or runaway horses, or anything of that sort, to add romance to the occasion, and test the gallantry of the gentlemen? I have an overpowering curiosity to know who would come to my rescue!"

"I am quite sure there would be a simultaneous rush in your direction of all the gentlemen in the party," was the gallant rejoinder.

"Provided I was in the safest place, I presume you mean?" she retorted, laughing.

"Be careful how you handle coals, Travers, if you don't want to be burned," interposed Emerson.

"He may be provided with an armor that will protect himself," she said, carelessly, yet

with a faint accentuation that brought the color to Emerson's face.

Somehow these two could never forego the opportunity of saying sharp and taunting things to each other. It had been so from the first. The acquaintance had commenced by a sharp debate, in which Miss Coblenz had talked so strangely at variance with all her previously expressed opinions upon the subject under discussion, that her sister Lena expressed her surprise after they were alone.

"O, I thought just as he did! But he is so conceited and wonderfully nice, that somebody ought to combat and ridicule his opinions, and so I sacrificed myself for the good of his soul," was the laughing answer.

This had been a year before, or nearly that. He had been supposed to be engaged to Ida Converse for two years, but she had never met him before. Since then they had met frequently, and for these last few weeks daily and almost hourly, but their antagonism was in no wise abated, particularly as far as she was concerned. Once he had ventured to suggest a truce.

"No," she said, solemnly, "I've a duty toward you, and I shall not be dissuaded from its performance by any conversational sugar-plums. You need me—you would go to seed in a week, if I didn't combat your specious absurdities and egotisms. Miss Converse ought to settle a pension for life upon me for the renovating effect my criticisms have upon your life and character; possibly she will."

"Nellie Coblenz, I wish most devoutly I had never seen you!" he said, with a sort of desperate savageness, quite unlike his usual easy suave speech.

"That is because I hold the mirror up to nature, I suppose," she responded lightly; but for an instant the dark bright face grew pale as death, and the small fingers closed convulsively over the book with which she was toying. Another instant, and a gay little song fluttered from her lips and floated out through the open window to the shaded veranda where Frederick Emerson was pacing up and down, with a disturbed face.

"Confound the girl! she is as heartless as she is impertinent!" he exclaimed, savagely, catching up his hat and striding off down the path to the orchard, where he came upon Annie Atherton, who blushed and looked pleased to see him. Here, at least, was a woman—a very lovely one, too—who looked up to him, believed in him, admired him.

She never ridiculed, or criticized, or doubted him in any way. It was very pleasant to be appreciated, and so, out of the gratitude of his heart, he said some very gallant and sentimental things. After this it came very easy to repeat them, with additions and variations, of course, and when he saw how eagerly they were accepted, his vanity—and he had the full masculine share of that commodity—was flattered and stimulated, and though it was the merest flirtation so far as his feelings were concerned, he continued it with increased zest, and a strange sort of deliberateness, considering the fact that his *fiancée* was present, and could not but be cognizant of it, even if it had not become a matter of banter for the whole party.

Since that morning in June, Annie had scarcely spoken to Mr. Travers. They had met frequently, but she was always cool and reticent towards him, and he could not draw her into the commonest conversation. After a while a rumor that she was in love with Emerson ran through the little gossip neighborhood. It pained John Travers strangely. "If he were sure his friend was in earnest," he said, "he should not mind; but no man should come there and trifle with this fatherless girl with impunity." And the grave handsome face grew stern, and the dark eyes flashed with an unwonted fire.

Possibly this picnic was a ruse, and to bring out the whole party, including Annie, and by careful observation to decide how much of truth there was in the rumors, might have had quite as much to do with John Travers's "liberality" as his accented politeness. But, whatever the motive that prompted the invitation, the invitation itself was most readily accepted. Some fifteen or twenty of Mr. Travers's particular friends were also invited, and the occasion promised to be unusually happy.

A few of the immediate neighbors wondered why Mr. Travers was so very attentive to Annie Atherton; for from the moment they entered the grounds he had quietly appropriated her to himself. Annie wondered a little herself, then remembering that morning's conversation, she said, "He is doing it to help me; to force them by his position to recognize me as their equal." And the generous glow at her heart melted the reserve of her manner, and made her gayer and happier than she had been for a long time. In her lightness of heart she almost forgot to watch for the admiring

glance from Fred Emerson's dreamy hazel eyes, and not until the party broke up into little knots after the tables were cleared, and Miss Converse and Mr. Emerson sauntered away over the hill, did she feel the first shadow of unrest or loneliness. Just then Nell Coblentz tripped by. Glancing after the retreating pair, she said, carelessly:

"Well matched, aren't they? That is what all the admiring friends say—fair woman and brave man, wealth and elegance, beauty, and genius, and good-breeding—*selah!*" And with a gay laugh that echoed oddly through the cool drowsy woods, she ran on to join her sister and mother.

A curious feeling of desolation swept through Annie Atherton's heart. The trees seemed waltzing about in just the strangest way; she cast a quick glance about to be sure no one was observing her, then with quick, though perhaps a little unsteady steps, she glided into the shadow of a great gray rock, and sank pale and panting on the cool ground. A moment of silence and vague thought, and then voices on the other side broke suddenly in upon her.

"What is this about 'Emerson's conquest' and 'rustic susceptibility,' and the like, that I hear vaguely hinted at?" asked a gentleman's voice, which Annie immediately recognized as belonging to Mr. Maitland.

"O, don't you know?" asked the softly-modulated voice of Miss Susie Gordon. "Mrs. Maitland, how could you keep your husband in such deplorable ignorance? You should have told him in very self-defence; for who knows but this gushing damsel may attract your husband, if he does not know how utterly and hopelessly she is in love with 'another?'"

"I really haven't thought of it since Frank came," Mrs. Maitland replied, laughing; "so pray forgive me. You can tell him, Susie, only don't suggest any such tragical possibilities as you just alluded to."

There was a little chorus of laughter, and then Miss Gordon said, still laughing:

"It really is the only fresh thing that we have had this summer. The 'downcast eyes and rosy blushes' we have had for the last five or six weeks, would make the fortune of a romance writer. And the best of it is, she doesn't suspect that he is only amusing himself, to while away the tedium of this drowsy place and season, but really believes her 'market is made,' as the rustics say. I dare say she has gorgeous visions of future great-

grand and grandeur as Mrs. Esquire Emerson; you know 'Squire' is the grand honorary title with 'country people.' And Miss Gordon laughed gayly.

"And she doesn't know he is engaged to Miss Converse? Is this hardly right? She is a pretty little girl, and, do you know, I fancied this Mr. Travers a good deal interested in her?"

"That shows a man's penetration! Mr. Travers is an old friend of the family; besides, he isn't a marrying man. But to return to our rustic belle. You see Fred says gallant things naturally, and very possibly he made some of his pretty speeches—the small silver he keeps to propitiate the fair—and our susceptible Deborah fell at the first fire."

"But what does Miss Converse say?"

"O, she doesn't mind! she is not afraid of losing him. Young ladies with fortunes in their own right don't have to exert themselves to keep their lovers—particularly if they are possessed of more ambition than bank stock."

There was the echo of light laughter, the faint rustle of footsteps on the drifting leaves, and then—silence! Annie Atherton covered her face with her hands, while wave after wave of anger, and shame, and mortification swept up to her hot throbbing temples.

"Annie—Miss Atherton, I want you a moment." And a firm arm was placed about her waist, and she was gently lifted to her feet. "I have something to show you, if you will come with me; something that no one has ever looked into before, something I never found until this summer myself."

Mechanically she suffered herself to be led down a cool shady path to a little woodland brook, with scarlet cardinals drooping over its ferny rim. Something of the calmness and rest of the place dropped into her heart, and she smiled almost brightly in the face which looked very searchingly into hers.

"Is that what you wished to show me, Mr. Travers? It is lovely, but did you never know of it until this summer?" she asked, lifting her eyes to his face.

"O, I have known the brook ever since I can remember; it is one of my oldest friends. But, Annie, I brought you here to show you my heart. I have only just found it, and what do you think I found in it—what but your face, little one?"

"I—I don't know," she stammered in sudden confusion.

"Let me tell you. I found a strong, pure,

deathless love—a love that can never change or fade, a love that makes me a better, and happier, and purer man. Annie, I am older than you, many years, but my heart is young and fresh. I never loved a woman before, I never spoke of love to one. What have you to say to me?"

"Mr. Travers," she said, a sudden fire kindling in her blue eyes, "you heard what they said just now, and you have come to me with this story, ready to sacrifice yourself to shield me from shame and ridicule. I thank you for your delicate and generous offer, but I cannot accept it." And trembling in every nerve, but with flashing eyes and burning cheeks, she was turning away, when he caught her hand and held her firmly.

"Annie, listen," he said, pleadingly. "Let me tell you all then; if you refuse me, I will not persecute further, but I shall never change in my feelings toward you, because that is utterly beyond my power. I will not deceive you in the least. I did hear Miss Gordon's heartless talk, and in way to shield you from gossip, and to cover them with confusion that I made this confession to you to-day. But, Annie, you remember a certain morning which you asked me to 'forget?' Well, I have loved you just so long—it seems a lifetime to me. I have tried to gain your favor—have tried to make myself your friend—but you have always repulsed me. Lately I heard what may be the reason. If it is, if you love this man, don't be afraid to tell me—"

"I do not love him, Mr. Travers; I scorn and despise him!" she interrupted, vehemently. "Miss Converse doesn't need her wealth to hold her lover, so far as I am concerned. I have been silly enough to feel flattered by his pretended admiration, that is all. But," and her eyes fell and her lips trembled, "to think that I have been the butt of their heartless ridicule all summer, have been the only amusement they have had—" And the overwrought feelings gave way in an uncontrollable flood of tears.

He suffered her to exhaust the first violence of her feelings, and then, as delicately and tenderly as a mother, soothed and quieted her till she smiled through her tears like a spring morning.

The party had all gathered at the tables when their host came up, looking so smiling and happy that his face forestalled his speech.

"Kind friends and neighbors," he said, drawing Annie's arm a little closer and firmer

in his, "I did not intend, when I invited you, to make the announcement I am about to make; but, fearing the cup of your enjoyment may not be quite full, I give you this drop from the overrunning measure of my own happiness: ladies and gentlemen, permit me to present to you my wife—that is to be very soon."

There was a perfect shower of applause, under cover of which Maitland said to Miss Gordon:

"Didn't I tell you so?" To which she replied, *sotto voce*:

"I never would have believed she was so artful; a perfectly shameless little flirt!"

"Mr. Travers," said Nell Coblentz, "may I relieve my feelings by embracing you? I don't know as it is the proper thing to do, but I must do something or go mad." And throwing her arms about Annie's neck, she kissed her till she was quite out of breath.

"That is backing down, Nell!" exclaimed Maitland.

"O, of course, I meant by proxy," she retorted; "only if there is any man on the face of the globe that I really should like to embrace at this particular moment, it is Mr. Travers. But I shan't do it; my powers of self-control are something marvellous." And from under her lowered lids she cast a quick keen glance at Frederick Emerson, who colored to the roots of his beautiful chestnut hair.

Annie did not return with the rest of the party, but came an hour later in Mr. Travers's best carriage, drawn by the lovely gray span which was the admiration and envy of all Carmel.

Mr. Travers walked straight to her mother's room with her. "We have come for your blessing," he said.

She took her daughter's face between her hands, and looked down into it with anxious eyes. Annie saw it, and knew what she was thinking of.

"Your girl is very happy, dear mother—so much happier than she deserves, or ever can deserve," she said, with a fond shy glance at her companion. "There has been a mistake all round, and some playing at cross purposes, but it is all over now."

"I am so glad!" Mrs. Atherton said, in a tone of joyous relief. "O Annie, my precious darling! if my taking summer boarders had shipwrecked your happiness, I should never have forgiven myself."

"My happiness is in such safe hands, dear mother, that all the summer boarders in the world cannot so much as touch it," was the confident answer.

A few days later Mr. Emerson announced his resolution to take a trip West. He had had letters, he said, urging him to come, and there never would be a better time, perhaps. He should get through his visit and be back to the city by the time they returned. There were the usual regrets, but his resolution remained unshaken; and as he was to leave early, he made his adieus the evening before his intended departure, that is, to all but Nellie Coblentz. She was in her room and staid there persistently all the evening.

She came down to breakfast about ten o'clock, asked carelessly if Emerson had gone, and ate her breakfast in such an abstracted, indolent way, that Mrs. Atherton asked her if she were sick.

"I don't know. I shouldn't wonder," she answered, laughing lightly. "I never was sick, as I remember; how does one feel, good or bad?"

Mrs. Atherton laughed, and Nell went up stairs; half an hour later she came down equipped for a walk.

"Where are you going, Nellie?" asked her father, as she stooped over, and, putting both hands over his eyes, kissed him, as she was going past.

"O, only out to drown myself, papa. If I am not home by tea-time, draw off the spring brook." Referring to a shallow pebbly-bottomed brook, less than a foot deep, which ran through the meadow at the foot of the orchard.

"Nellie, what a little incorrigible you are!" he answered, laughing.

"But you rather like me, though, don't you?" she said, coaxingly, laying her bright face against his shoulder. "And, papa, if I should get drowned, or—or anything—you won't forget me, will you, you old darling?"

With a sudden impulse Mr. Coblentz put both arms about his daughter and kissed her tenderly. A moment later and she was waving her handkerchief to him from the street below.

As it grew late in the afternoon there was a general inquiry for Nellie Coblentz. Lena and her mother had been to ride, and so had not missed her. Finally tea-time came, but still Nellie had not returned. They waited, at first vexed and impatient, but gradually growing alarmed and uneasy. Just as Mr.

Coblentz, was starting out, however, a boy came up from the village with a letter, saying that a young woman at the depot gave him a quarter to bring it there.

"What time did you see the young lady?" asked Mr. Coblentz.

"Just before three o'clock, sir; she went out in the three o'clock train," replied the boy.

"Why did you not come immediately?" he asked, with warmth.

"Because, sir, the young lady said as how I needn't come up till after supper, and I obeyed orders."

There was no more to be said, and as the lad turned away, Mr. Coblentz broke open the letter, which was as follows:

"DEAR PAPA,—I have concluded to run away. Please do not send a detective after me and get my name in the papers. It wouldn't be pleasant, you know. NELL."

"What wild freak is that girl up to now?" Mr. Coblentz said, half angry, half amused.

"She has taken the whim to go to town, undoubtedly, and will be back to-morrow. There never was any accounting for Nell's caprices," her mother said, smilingly, yet looking a little vexed.

But Nell did not come back the next day, nor the next. The fourth day Mr. Coblentz went to the city. He expected, of course, Nellie was at home, but he remembered she did not look quite well, and Mrs. Atherton had narrated her conversation with her at the breakfast table, and he got anxious, fearing she was at home ill and alone, save the housekeeper, who had been left in charge. So he went down.

They did not expect him back till night, but a little past noon he came in, and quietly called his wife and Lena aside.

"Just read that," he said, putting a letter in his wife's hand. "I found it in the office on my return."

Mrs. Coblentz unfolded the paper, and as her eye glanced at the bottom of the sheet she gave a low cry and grew deadly pale.

"Hush, Marie! don't make a scene, for Heaven's sake!" her husband whispered; "it will be bad enough, at the best. I suppose we must tell Miss Converse?"

"Yes, I suppose so," she sighed. "O Arthur, I wish the earth would open and swallow us all up! Just think of the dreadful notoriety," she added, in a distressed voice.

"You always allowed Nell to do and say improper things," said Lena, "and this is the

end of it. I always expected she would do something dreadful."

In order that the reader may fully understand the "dreadful" thing which Nell had done, I transcribe the letter, which was in a gentleman's hand, and as follows:

"MR. ARTHUR COBLENTZ:

"DEAR SIR,—I was married to your daughter Nellie four days ago—the evening of her departure from Mrs. Atherton's. I know how shocked you will all be, and I have no excuse to offer save this: I loved her almost to madness! I have battled with myself, calling upon honor, interest, everything, to help me overcome my passion, but the contest was too unequal, for love is all-conquering. I have been an idler hitherto, now I can overcome anything! In this new country I am going to begin a new life, with God's help, and that of my darling wife's. I do not ask you to forgive me yet, but some day, if I live, you shall be proud to acknowledge me your son. FREDERICK EMERSON."

To which was appended this characteristic postscript from Nellie:

"DEARLY BELOVED,—Fred and I have at last concluded a truce—under the flag of our union! At last order reigns in Warsaw. I hope you will all be as glad about it as I, for the siege has been a long and hard one on both sides. We happened to discover how hard, and mutually resolved to bury the hatchet and light the torch of peace at Hymen's altar.

"Dear, dear old papa! Forgive me for all the pain or anxiety I have ever caused you, and especially this last crowning act. I do not seek to justify myself; I only say this: For his sake I am willing to give up everything else on earth; even your dear love. You all thought me gay, keen, careless and heart whole—alas, how have the mighty fallen! I am only a silly, sentimental, commonish sort of a woman, and am going to learn to make butter, and cheese, and brown bread, and settle down into a staid respectable matron. I'll let you know when I do! "NELL."

The Coblentzes immediately returned to the city, and in a week the rest of the party followed. If Miss Converse was pained by the desertion of her betrothed, no one ever knew. She had a rare faculty of keeping her own counsel, as well as her self-control. She neither grew pale, refused her meals, nor laid awake to weep, as, according to all respectable precedent, she ought to have done; and, as I shall not have another so good an opportunity, I will add here that she married a wealthy suitor, whom she had twice rejected, in less than three months after her return to the city, and it is to be hoped "lived happily ever after."

"If anybody wants summer boarders, they

are welcome to them, so far as I am concerned," Mrs. Atherton said, when the last ones had taken their departure.

"It has been an incalculable blessing to me, for if I hadn't got so desperately jealous of Emerson, I never should have dared to propose, I was such an old grave fellow, and

Annie was so young and beautiful," John Travers said, coming in just then.

"O John!" exclaimed Annie, in a deprecating voice, blushing as brightly as the crimson fuchsias hiding among her bright brown curls. "If only you had done it before," she added archly.

TERESA.

BY CARRIE D. BEEBE.

It was early in June, when mamma and I took possession of our country house for the summer. We were an affectionate family, or, as some said, "clannish." There were six of us, three boys, and three girls, all married, and with families except myself, who was left a widow five years before.

It did not seem necessary to keep a house for only mamma and I to occupy three months in the year; but, as I said, the family was large, and although my brothers and sisters usually spent the summer at watering places, mamma, who is the loveliest and dearest of old ladies, said the children needed a home to come to in the summer, of all times; so each year regularly, accompanied by the cook and a chambermaid, we took possession of our house in Denton, to pass the heated term in quietude, and to provide an asylum for all ill or weary pleasure-seekers, who had a claim upon the family name—Trevanion.

Robert and James, the eldest of the family, had been inseparable at home and at school, and when their education was completed, they formed a partnership in the mercantile line as "Trevanion Brothers," for father disliked professions. I was next in age, and younger than myself was my favorite brother, Walter. Then came Emma and Laura, also inseparable, who were married at the same time, about two years before my story opens. My father had, at this time, been dead for some years.

Walter was an artist, and a few years before had gone to Italy, to perfect himself as far as possible in the art of painting. About a year after he left home, while in Florence, he was one morning walking in the Cascine, a lovely park, bordered by the river Arno. It was a bright dewy morning, and he had wandered into a secluded, shaded portion of the park, where the air was fragrant with violets, and the birds were sweetly singing, when two ladies on horseback passed by.

The elder was fair and blue-eyed, and the younger, though her figure and the proud carriage of her head resembled her companion, possessed the most beautiful face he had ever before looked upon. She was slender, but her form was finely moulded; her hair was black and abundant, and her clear complexion

softly flushed with exercise. But the chief charm of her face was in her eyes, so large, dark and at first, dreamy; but as her companion addressed her, they flashed so suddenly and brilliantly that Walter, who was a passionate lover of the beautiful, was dazzled.

He met her afterwards, repeatedly, in the park, and she was always accompanied by the same lady. He was deeply in love from the first; and was, therefore, agreeably surprised one day when the ladies entered his studio, and desired him to paint the portrait of the younger. He undertook the task with a strange mingling of misgiving and delight; for he feared he would be unable to do justice to her beauty, although his ability as a portrait painter was rare.

The portrait progressed slowly, and they became well acquainted in the mean time. Walter learned that the young lady's name was Teresa, and that the elder one was her mother, an American who, in her younger years, married a wealthy Florentine, with whom she became acquainted while on a visit to Italy, accompanied by her brother. Her husband died a few years after her marriage, leaving Teresa, her only child.

Teresa was a Tuscan only by birth, for she received an English education. Walter, who was filled with a vague feeling of unrest from the moment he first saw her, now found it utterly impossible to banish her from his mind for a moment. He spent his mornings in touching and retouching the portrait, and watching for her coming; and always when she came, she seemed to bring with her an atmosphere fragrant with violets and melodious with bird-songs. She usually spoke English, and it sounded so musical to him, reminding him of home. Then her voice was so sweet and clear, gliding in and out the words so gracefully, and giving to her sprightly conversation a subtle charm. She seemed entirely unconscious of her power, however, and then, day by day,

"She drew him on to love her,
And to worship the divineness of the smile hid
in her eyes."

But it was her eyes that gave him the most trouble in painting her portrait, for their expression was so varied, that he could never

catch one that pleased him, without seeing immediately another, which he liked far more.

Her dress was quaint, and very becoming; a loose black velvet robe, looped away from her exquisitely shaped neck and arms with diamond clasps. A gold band studded with diamonds kept her hair in place over her forehead, and thence it fell in its dark luxuriance nearly to her feet.

The picture was completed at last, and pronounced a remarkable likeness; but when it was sent home Walter felt as though all the brightness of his life had gone out with it. He requested and obtained permission to visit Teresa, and a few months afterwards they were married.

Walter's affection for his wife seemed to increase constantly; and in his letters home he continually raved of her beauty, her intellect, and her sweetness of temper; called her his "tropical flower," and "the flower of the world to him." And I, who loved him devotedly, was so thankful for his happiness. He painted another portrait, which he sent home to us, and afterwards, I cherished a warm love for my beautiful sister "over the sea," second only to that I felt for my brother.

We corresponded regularly, and Teresa's letters were affectionate and womanly, and seemed imbued with a tender grace, all her own. A little daughter was born to them, named Florence in honor of her birthplace, and Walter's only earthly regret seemed to be that she was more like himself instead of her mother.

But suddenly their letters ceased; and at last Walter wrote that he should return soon, but he said never a word of Teresa or his child. In the meantime, we were not to write him, as he was travelling constantly, and our letters would fail to reach him. I was alarmed at this, but decided to keep my fears from the rest of the family until we should hear something more definite. Soon after, we moved to Denton, but I could not keep Walter out of my mind.

Our country house was a white two-story cottage, and near it, separated only by a grassy alley, through which ran a low picket-fence, was another house, quite similar to our own. Both had maples in front, and porches partially shaded by climbing roses in the rear. I soon observed that the house had a new tenant, and one day I saw a beautiful child, hardly three years of age, playing on the grassy lawn at the rear of our neighbor's

house. She was plucking the small white clover blossoms with her dimpled fingers, and carrying them to a lady who sat on the porch, and calling her, "her dear pretty mamma."

At this I turned to observe the lady, and although I could not see her face, there was something about her graceful form and the dignified carriage of her head that seemed familiar.

I saw her often after this, as she sat out on the porch, sometimes sewing upon something for the child, or singing low snatches of song, which often ceased suddenly in the midst of a strain, as though her voice was choked with tears. Her face was pale, but remarkably beautiful; very sorrowful in expression, though never tearful. She would caress the child with passionate fondness at times, and again the little one would play alone in the grass for hours, while her mother seemed lost in a painful reverie. I experienced a sort of sorrowful pleasure in watching her, she was so young, so beautiful and so lonely. I was strongly impressed with the idea that I had seen her before, but where or when I could not discover. Her favorite dresses were black, thin and floating, although she did not wear mourning; and sometimes, at her throat or wrist, would gleam a rare jewel, whose costliness surprised me. She seemed like one upon whom a deep sorrow had fallen; but which could not quite crush out the hopefulness of a brave cheerful spirit.

One day when the child had strayed to the fence, and was peeping through it, I caught her up in my arms and kissed her. She was not timid, and she looked up with eager earnest eyes. I placed her upon the grass with a strange stifling sensation as I passed into the house, for a suspicion flashed suddenly through my mind.

"Mamma!" I cried, "how came that little child by Walter's eyes? they are precisely like his, and I never saw eyes like them before."

Mamma looked up from the book she was reading, and peering in a surprised sort of way over her specs at me for a moment, said she really could not imagine how it was so.

"It is very strange," I said, "and strange that Walter should write so vaguely," but remembering that I ought not to annoy mamma, I added:

"It is foolish for me to excite myself in this manner; everything will be explained to our satisfaction when Walter comes home."

Mamma replied that she "was quite sure of

it," and resumed her reading, leaving me in doubt as to whether she was sure I was foolish, or of Walter's safe return.

The next day the little child came to the fence again, and in playing, accidentally struck her cheek against it. I caught her up and quieted her, for she was not much hurt; and immediately after her mother came out, and gracefully thanking me in a voice that sounded like the soft touch of a silver bell, she carried the child into the house.

I said nothing to mamma upon the subject, but my mind was convinced of one thing—there never could be two pairs of such eyes in one world, and the eyes of my beautiful neighbor were precisely like the ones which looked out from Teresa's picture, in the parlor of our house in Trevanion Place.

One evening soon after this, mamma retired early, on account of slight indisposition, and I was sitting in the parlor alone, when suddenly a gentleman stepped upon the porch, and entered the hall without ringing. It was Walter, a little older and a little paler than when he left us, but the same dear brother, without doubt. He would not allow me to disturb mamma or call the cook; he came directly from the city, and had dined before starting.

"But," I asked, "where are Teresa and little Florence?"

He turned paler at this, and said:

"They are not coming. Some time I will tell you about it, but do not ask me to-night."

"Do relieve my anxiety at once," I exclaimed, growing agitated in spite of my efforts to appear calm. "Dear brother, it is not idle curiosity that urges me to insist upon knowing the truth at once."

He did not answer for a moment, and his face grew deathly pale.

"I am in sore trouble, sister," he said, at last, "and perhaps I ought to tell you, but you cannot help me—no one on earth can!" And he rose and paced the room excitedly.

"Be calm and tell me all, dear Walter. I do not wish to excite too much hope until I know the facts of the case, but with the knowledge I now have, I am sure I can help you."

He seemed surprised but doubtful; however, he seated himself, saying:

"Listen quietly then, and do not interrupt or blame me, for I am so nervous I could not bear it. You know my temper was always hasty."

At this moment mamma, who had recog-

nized his voice, came down, and their greetings over, Walter, at my suggestion, commenced his story:

"You know how I loved Teresa. We had been married for more than three years, and enjoyed uninterrupted happiness, with the exception of the grief caused by the death of her excellent mother, which occurred within a year of our marriage. About this time I had occasion to visit the studio of a friend in Rome, and, on account of professional advantages derived there, I sometimes remained for two weeks at a time. Teresa occasionally accompanied me, though oftener, on account of our little child, remained in Florence.

"At one of these times, when I had been absent for a few days, I received a letter from an unknown person saying that if I would return without my wife's knowledge, I would discover facts that would astonish me. I was of course astounded, not being aware, until afterwards, that I had a single enemy in Florence. I tried in vain to banish the subject from my mind as something too absurd to think of for a moment, but found it impossible to do so. After passing a sleepless night I determined to set out for home at once. After a tedious journey I reached the house soon after dark, and passed noiselessly around to the room which Teresa usually occupied at that hour. It was lighted, and I could distinctly observe everything passing within.

"Teresa sat in her armchair with our child upon her knee. She wore a dress of bright scarlet cloth with white trimmings, and the flowing sleeves fell back, disclosing her white rounded arms. Her hair was banded back with a spray of coral, and fell, sweeping the rich carpet, as she rocked slowly to and fro. Her dress was a particular favorite of mine, and one which few could have worn to advantage; but her beauty was so dazzling that the bright rich color only heightened its effect. She was singing, in her matchless voice, a low cradle hymn to the child, and her eyes wore a soft tender expression. I had never seen her more beautiful, and in another moment I would have burst into the room and clasped her to my heart, but the door opposite opened and a gentleman, a perfect stranger to me, entered. At sight of him Teresa smiled, and little Florence put out her arms as though she knew him well. He sat down by Teresa's side, caressing at the same moment the child and its mother's hand which was placed around it. Teresa looked

up into his eyes, and in the same breath he said, 'Dear Teresa, I have no one but you to love in the world now.'

"How I left the house I never knew, for my reason forsook me. But nearly a week afterwards I awoke to consciousness in a miserable inn in Sienna. Here I formed my plans. I would leave her at once and forever; and—for jealousy had turned me into a demon—to cause her to feel some small portion of the agony I endured I directed a formal note to her, saying that I had been deceived in my affection towards her, and as I loved no longer it was useless for us to see each other more.

"This done, I wandered about for some weeks, until at last I arrived in Rome. Proceeding to my former lodgings I found a letter addressed to me from Teresa, dated the day previous to the night I had looked upon her last. It had lain unread for three months!"

At this Walter became too agitated to proceed, and sat for some time wiping the perspiration from his forehead, although the night was cool.

Mamma was struck dumb with amazement, and although I guessed the sequel, I could hardly wait for him to finish. At last he found voice to proceed:

"It was written in her own dear way, telling me that her Uncle George, her mother's only brother, had arrived unexpectedly from America, and was now stopping at our home. She did not recognize him at first, for she had not seen him before in several years. He was much like her mother, and still young looking and handsome though forty-five. She closed with expressions of love and a hope that I would speedily return.

"When I read this my brain felt as though it were on fire, and the very air I breathed seemed to scorch me. I proceeded to Florence with all possible haste, but when I arrived the villa was occupied by an English family stopping for a year in Italy. They knew nothing of Teresa, and could only give the address of the gentleman who let the house. It proved to be her uncle, and his address was in New York. Without stopping to find the author of the mysterious note which had been the first cause of my trouble, and which I now suspected to have been written by a rejected suitor of Teresa's, I sailed immediately, and arrived in the city last evening. I called at the office of her uncle, but he was absent, and I could learn

nothing; so after waiting for some time I concluded to come home."

He was greatly agitated by the recital, and at the close, blamed himself bitterly for having been so hasty in his conclusions, and mamma agreed to all he said so earnestly that he stopped suddenly and burst into tears.

This touched me; for I had not known him to shed tears before since he was a little child, and I saw that his nervous system was completely exhausted by the anxiety through which he had passed; and he was so remorseful and despairing, that I hastened to comfort him.

"Do not excite yourself, dear Walter," I said, smoothing his damp hair. "It is very fortunate that you came directly here, for I am certain that Teresa is, with little Florence, spending the summer in the next house."

At this he sprang up and dashed out of the house, and without paying the slightest attention to my proposition that he should remain until I could prepare Teresa to meet him, he rushed into the cottage. Almost immediately, he returned, exclaiming wildly:

"Sister! she will not see me or hear me speak one word!"

I almost feared for his reason, but begged him to be quiet, and all would yet be well. I said that "Teresa knew nothing except that he had cruelly deserted her without apparent cause, and under the circumstances her behaviour was quite natural. I would go over and explain everything to her, and she would see him in the morning, no doubt." He grew more composed at this, and I left him to seek Teresa.

I found her lying in a deep swoon, and her servant weeping over her and wringing her hands. I raised her in my arms, and with the assistance of her attendant carried her to her room, and succeeded in restoring her to consciousness. She lay perfectly motionless, with her eyes fixed upon mine. But O, the hopeless anguish of her face! Walter's agitation had deeply moved me, but it seemed nothing in comparison to the stony despair depicted in her silent face, so much more eloquent than any amount of weeping or hopeless words.

I took her hand in mine, and brushed the heavy hair away from her pallid face. She lay perfectly passive, and at length I began to tell her, gently, all that Walter had related to me. She heard me through without a word, surprise mingling with the sorrow in her eyes as I proceeded, and her hand which

I still held, trembled slightly. I told her of his boyhood, almost faultless with the exception of his hasty temper, and of my love for him. Of his departure from home, his letters, before and after his marriage, breathing of devotion to her. From her own letters, and from the portrait he had sent, how I had learned to love her dearly too. I had recognized her before Walter came, and though I knew nothing of the facts of the case, had watched her lovingly, and longed to comfort her in her loneliness; and here she clasped my neck with a bitter cry, as of a heart famished for want of love, and bursting into tears she sobbed herself into calmness on my breast.

Then she kissed me and rose, and seated herself in her chair and began to rock slowly to and fro. How my heart ached for her. She was so young, so beautiful and so sorrowful. The very atmosphere surrounding her seemed inspired with grace and beauty.

Little Florence lay sleeping peacefully in her crib, and I bent over her, noting her resemblance to my brother even in sleep. Teresa came and knelt by the other side of the bed.

"She is very like Walter," I said, "especially her eyes. I have observed them before."

"They are," she replied, *stooping involuntarily to kiss the white eyelids.*

I smiled.

"I did love him," she said, a crimson blush overspreading her face.

"And you love him still, dear Teresa."

She rose and took my hand.

"I did not look for his coming," she said, "for I thought he had ceased to love me. I would prefer to spend the night alone, for I must think. Go now, dear sister, but come to me early in the morning."

"He loves you dearly," I said, "and has suffered so deeply for his rashness. We all love you, and desire to receive you as a dear sister." And kissing her affectionately I left her.

Walter, who was anxiously awaiting my return, asked me so many questions in the same breath that I was quite bewildered by his earnestness.

"She desires to pass the night alone," I said, "or I would not have left her; she wishes me to return in the morning. I cannot see how you ever doubted her."

He was so humble and so remorseful that I related our interview, by way of comfort. Next morning I rose early, and passed, as

I thought, noiselessly into the hall, but before I had closed my door Walter's opened.

"Are you going over now, sister?"

"Not yet. You must be quiet, and take breakfast with mamma if I am not here."

I went down, took a cup of coffee and then went out. Teresa had fallen asleep, but little Florence was awake, and playing with her mother's long hair as it fell over the pillow to the floor. Thinking it a good omen that Teresa slept so soundly, I dressed the child and took her to my brother.

Poor Walter! to see him clasping the little one to his heart, overjoyed to find she recognized him, would have brought tears to sterner eyes than mine; but determined not to give way to my feelings I left them and went to meet Teresa. She had just come down, and was quite pale, but her face wore a peaceful expression.

I prevailed upon her to take a cup of coffee, and then referred to the subject which was uppermost in our minds. She was quite calm and conversed freely. In a few moments she summoned her servant, and bade her inform Mr. Trevanion that she wished to speak with him.

A moment after we heard his quick step on the walk, and at the sound, Teresa buried her white face in her hands. He rushed into the room and caught her in his arms, entreating, caressing and soothing her in the same breath, while I stole gently away to amuse myself with little Florence.

A few hours afterwards I went to inform them that mamma and lunch were waiting, and we all went over; and after mamma had caressed and cried a little over Teresa we sat down to the table. Walter, himself once more, smiling and triumphant, and Teresa, trying to smile to hide her tremulousness and agitation. I saw that the excitement of the day and previous evening had been too much for her, especially as I knew she had slept but little during the night. So after lunch I took her up to my room and made her lie down for a few moments, hoping she might fall asleep. Soon after, mamma appeared with a cup of warm hop-tea, her remedy in all nervous cases, and Teresa drank it more I think to please mamma than from any faith she had in the tea. It did soothe her, and a few moments after I had the satisfaction of seeing her fall into a quiet slumber. I darkened the room, and went out to find Walter sitting just outside the door. I drove him down stairs, and an hour afterwards

Teresa appeared, quite refreshed. At her request, we went over to her house.

"I am expecting Uncle George," she said, "and I fear it will be hard to reconcile him, for he has been very bitter in his feelings and remarks towards Walter."

At that moment Mr. Cranstown appeared, to speak for himself; and his face grew very black when he saw how matters were. Walter tried to explain, but without a word he turned and left the room. Walter was so distressed, and Teresa so agitated, that I sprang out after him, and intercepted him on the porch. What I said to him I have not the remotest idea, but I must have explained everything to his satisfaction, for he went back into the parlor and kissed Teresa, and shook hands with Walter and me, and then Teresa kissed me, and in the confusion I was seized with a most unaccountable fit of lachrymosity; so I dashed over home and up to my room to have a good hearty cry.

Mr. Cranstown, fearing that he had wounded my feelings in some way, came over

to explain, and when his message was brought me I cried the more. Presently I heard mamma's voice down stairs, and the momentary expectation that she would appear with a cup of hop-tea produced a sedative affect; and drying my eyes, I went down and soon found myself quietly conversing with Mr. Cranstown, and feeling as though I had known him all my life. Walter and Teresa appeared soon after, and we all chatted merrily until dinner was served.

Although Mr. Cranstown explained to my entire satisfaction his innocence of any attempt to wound my feelings, so many other important matters came up for discussion, that he called the next day, and the next; and finally he concluded to spend the entire summer with Walter and Teresa, and so fell into the habit (the houses were so near) of calling every day, and of inviting me to ride out with him often. And before the summer was over, at his earnest solicitation, I consented to become Teresa's aunt, by marriage, although she calls me "sister," to this day.